



Field Guides Tour Report

BIRDING PLUS - IRELAND IN FALL 2014

Nov 6, 2014 to Nov 16, 2014

Terry and Karen McEneaney

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

We had great craic (Irish for "fun") on the fall Field Guides *Ireland: Birds, Traditional Music & Pubs* tour, and a good time was had by all. This was not just a birding tour, not just a traditional Irish music tour, not just an archaeological tour, and not just a pub tour. It was a combination of all these activities molded into one.

The beauty of visiting Ireland this time of year is that it lacks large crowds of tourists, the music is very good, the pubs are busy with local Irish, and the wintering birding can be quite good with migrants from northern latitudes. We ended up with 100 species of birds and eight species of mammals, which was predicted for a fall Field Guides tour of Ireland this time of year. Our rarest bird species for the tour included: Great Egret, Mediterranean Gull, and Carrion Crow. These are all new species for this fall tour. Our rarest mammal for the tour was the Northern "Blue" or "Irish" Hare.

The weather had been mild for several weeks prior to this tour, then followed the Irish mist, rain, occasionally sun. And luckily for us the changing weather forced boreal migrants to arrive from far away places like Iceland, Greenland, and Fennoscandia, particularly Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, and Redwing.

We visited close to two dozen unique Irish pubs over the course of the tour, and we had traditional Irish music sessions seven out of the eight nights. Our

archaeological visits to Newgrange, the two Armagh cathedrals, the Irish spiritual site called Navan Fort (Emain Macha), and rock fortress of the Rock of Cashel were well received. Birding the wooded grounds of one of Ireland's most famous castles (Castle Leslie-County Monaghan) was also a unique Ireland experience. At Castle Leslie we encountered Irish wolfhounds, walkers, horse riders, and large numbers of corvids heading to a night roost.

At Emain Macha we also got to experience Irish road bowling (first time ever witnessing it in person), a game found mainly in County Armagh (N. Ireland) and County Cork (Republic of Ireland). Road bowling involves skillfully rolling a small cannon ball down a small country road for several miles with the winner having the fewest throws, with lots of spectators walking with the participants.

Our travels brought us to the Republic of Ireland and an area rarely visited by tourists--namely beautiful Northern Ireland. A brief visit to Keady in County Armagh allowed us the opportunity to understand the importance of this area in terms of the history of traditional Irish music. A visit to Belfast allowed a better understanding of the history of "The Troubles." After birding Belfast Harbor we ended up in Belfast and the prettiest and most ornate Irish pub in the world.

In summary, we explored a large portion of eastern Ireland in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland during this tour. We had a well-rounded Irish experience--the forty shades of green, a good diversity of Ireland's birds, traditional Irish music sessions, unique pubs and archaeological sites, and beautiful landscapes. But it was the people of Ireland, their hospitality and humor that truly made this such a pleasant Ireland experience.

Thanks to all of you for joining us on this 2014 Field Guides tour, and we hope to see you again on future trips! In the meantime, Slan Ahaile! -- Safe travels!

--Terry & Karen McEneaney



One great aspect of this tour is the chance to enjoy traditional Irish music. Here, a pub session at Katy Barry's in Waterford. (Photo by guide Terry McEneaney)

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*) – Hundreds at Wexford Slobs.

GRAYLAG GOOSE (*Anser anser*) – Close to a dozen at Lady's Island Lake.

BRANT (*Branta bernicla*) – Thousands scattered along east coast of Ireland. All of the "pale-bellied race" B. b. hrota. Most of these birds summer in the eastern Canadian arctic and Greenland and winter in Ireland.

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*) – Hundreds.

WHOOPER SWAN (*Cygnus cygnus*) – Saw over 100 individuals at Wexford Slobs and North Slob.

COMMON SHELDUCK (*Tadorna tadorna*) – Dozens along coast and on mudflats--mainly during low tide.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – Over a couple dozen found at Midleton Pond.

EURASIAN WIGEON (*Anas penelope*) – Dozens.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Quite common.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*) – Several individuals at Lough Neagh.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (*Anas crecca*) – Hundreds.

TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*) – A few on the first day at Santry Park and at Lough Neagh.

GREATER SCAUP (*Aythya marila*) – Found a few dozen at Lough Neagh.

COMMON SCOTER (*Melanitta nigra*) – Found on days five and six. Rosslare Harbor and beach at Ravenwood.

COMMON GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala clangula*) – Found mainly at Wexford Slobs.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – Found several individuals at Dungarvan Harbor.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

RING-NECKED PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*) – Found most days. First introduced into Ireland from China in the 16th century. These dark forms of the "torquatus group" are very dark with a white neck collar.

Gaviidae (Loons)

RED-THROATED LOON (*Gavia stellata*) – Found on Dundalk Bay and Clogher Head.

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – Found on three different days. A winter migrant from Greenland and Iceland.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) – Found on five of the eight days in the field. Excellent looks on day 1.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE (*Podiceps cristatus*) – Found on a minimum of four of the eight days in the field.

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

NORTHERN FULMAR (*Fulmarus glacialis*) – Found at Dunmore East and Youghal.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

NORTHERN GANNET (*Morus bassanus*)

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – Found seven of the eight days in the field.

EUROPEAN SHAG (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*) – Found on day seven-Dungarvan Harbor.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GRAY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*) – Found every day-quite common.

GREAT EGRET (EURASIAN) (*Ardea alba alba*) – Great Egret- a great find for Ireland. The bird flew in front of the group at relatively close range.
Found on Ravenwood beach near Raven's Wood Reserve.

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*) – Quite regular the further south we traveled in Ireland. Found on three of the eight days in the field.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) – A lone individual at Wexford Slobs on day five.

COMMON BUZZARD (*Buteo buteo*) – Seen every day.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

EURASIAN MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*) – Found on six of the eight days in the field.

EURASIAN COOT (*Fulica atra*) – Found on five of the eight days in the field.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus ostralegus*) – Numerous-found on five of the eight days in the field.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Called the "Grey Plover" in Europe. Found on day seven at Dungarvan Harbor. A winter visitor most likely from breeding grounds in western Siberia.

EUROPEAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis apricaria*) – Found on three of the eight days in the field. Notable areas include: Dundalk Bay, Wexford Slobs, North Slob.

NORTHERN LAPWING (*Vanellus vanellus*) – Found on five of the eight days in the field. Standout areas include: Belfast Harbor, Dundalk Bay, Wexford Slobs, North Slob, Dungarvan Harbor.

COMMON RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius hiaticula*) – Found on two of the eight days in the field, mainly at Belfast Harbor and Dundalk Bay.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – One individual found at Wexford Harbor.

COMMON GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*) – Found on three of the eight days in the field. Most notable areas include: Wexford Slobs, Wexford Harbor, Woodstown Beach.

COMMON REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*) – Found on five of the eight days in the field. Quite regular along the coast.

WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*) – Found three individuals at Wexford Slobs.

EURASIAN CURLEW (*Numenius arquata*) – Quite numerous in the winter. Very few breeding pairs remain in Ireland these days. These birds are most likely from Scotland, northern England, and Scandinavia.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa limosa*) – Observed on four of the eight days in the field, all along the coast. A common winter visitor from Iceland, few breeding pairs in Ireland.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa lapponica*) – Found half the days in the field, all along the coast. A winter visitor, most likely originating from northern Europe. Breeds on the arctic tundra.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – Found on five of the eight days in the field. Most often found along rocky coasts and shorelines and oftentimes associated with rocks and/or seaweed.

RED KNOT (*Calidris canutus*) – A photo of a flock of Common Redshanks revealed a Red Knot in the group. Location: Dundalk Bay on Crisettown Strand.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – Found on three of the eight days in the field. A bird of "motion"--the motion or soft movement of the waves reaching the sandy beaches, coupled with their unique running behavior motion trying to outrun the waves in search of food.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – Found on two of the eight days in the field.

COMMON SNIPE (*Gallinago gallinago*) – Found on two of the eight days in the field.

Alcidae (Auks, Murres, and Puffins)

COMMON MURRE (*Uria aalge*) – Found on two of the eight days in the field.

BLACK GUILLEMOT (*Cephus grylle*) – Found on four of the eight days in the field.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*) – Found on days five and six. Most notable areas include: Rosslare Harbor and Dunmore East.

BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) – One of the most numerous gulls in Ireland. Found every day.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL (*Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*) – A nice find on day five at Rosslare Harbor. One individual (winter adult) flew right in front of the group as we stood on the headwall, then disappeared as it mixed in with the masses of larids.

MEW GULL (*Larus canus*) – Found on five of the eight days in the field. Also known in Ireland as the "Common Gull", this bird appeared more numerous as we headed south in Ireland.

HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*) – Found every day. One of the most numerous gulls of Ireland.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*) – Found on five of the eight days in the field. Their numbers increased as we headed south along the coast, culminating at the peak area near Woodstown Beach and Passage East.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*) – Found on five of the eight days in the field.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Found every day--all of the feral type.

COMMON WOOD-PIGEON (*Columba palumbus*) – Found every day and quite numerous.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Found every day and seems to become more numerous each year we visit Ireland.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

COMMON KINGFISHER (*Alcedo atthis*) – Found on day two at Lough Neagh. It was a "flash in the pan" of baby blue, emerald, and rust. It perched on a post right in front of the hide or blind we were in as it was raining.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

EURASIAN KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) – Found on days four and six. Most notable areas included: Dundalk Bay and Ravenwood.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – Found on day four in Dundalk Bay. Flew by our group in hot pursuit of shorebirds.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

EURASIAN JAY (EURASIAN) (*Garrulus glandarius hibernicus*) – Found on day two at Lough Neagh--only on individual. Very difficult to see for such a large colorful jay. [E]

EURASIAN MAGPIE (*Pica pica*) – Found every day.

EURASIAN JACKDAW (*Corvus monedula*) – Found every day. The Irish name for this bird is "Cag", in reference to its call. Very numerous. Even Jackdaws them nest building and pair bonding. Great views of this species at the most famous rock fortress of all in Ireland known as the Rock of Cashel. Also watched a significant number of Jackdaws and Rooks heading to a night roost at Castle Leslie.

ROOK (*Corvus frugilegus*) – Found every day. Not only did we see rooks but many colonies called rookeries. The bare fleshy grey-white skin on the lores allows the bird to easily see worms, insects, larvae, root crops, and grubs in the fields. Also watched a significant number of Rooks and Jackdaws heading to a night roost at Castle Leslie.

CARRION CROW (*Corvus corone*) – One individual detected as we stopped on day seven at Midleton Pond. Found next to the road, then it flew off mixing in with the rooks.

HOODED CROW (*Corvus cornix*) – Found every day. This bird is more numerous along the coast this time of year.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Found one individual flying closely overhead calling at Raven's Wood Reserve on day six.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

COAL TIT (BRITISH) (*Periparus ater hibernicus*) – Found on a minimum of three of the eight days in the field. Of the race *Periparus ater britannicus* noted for its more olive tone to the mantle and flanks. [E]

GREAT TIT (*Parus major*) – Found on days 2,3, and 5.

EURASIAN BLUE TIT (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) – Found on five of the eight days in the field.

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

LONG-TAILED TIT (*Aegithalos caudatus*) – Watched this species on days one and seven.

Certhiidae (Treecreepers)

EURASIAN TREECREEPER (*Certhia familiaris*) – Found three individuals total on days three and six. Most notable locations include: Castle Leslie and Raven's Wood Reserve.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

EURASIAN WREN (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) – Found every day and quite often.

Cinclidae (Dippers)

WHITE-THROATED DIPPER (*Cinclus cinclus hibernicus*) – Found one individual on day four, near "Meeting of the Waters" in Avoca. [E]

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDCREST (*Regulus regulus*) – Found seven out of the eight days in the field.

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

EUROPEAN ROBIN (*Erithacus rubecula*) – Technically a "chat" for the lack of a better term, and belonging to the Muscipapidae (old World Flycatchers) rather than the family of "robins/thrushes and allies" of the family Turdidae. One of the most darling birds in the world. Found every day and often.

EUROPEAN STONECHAT (*Saxicola rubicola*) – Found on days four and five in particular.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EURASIAN BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*) – Found every day and quite common.

REDWING (*Turdus iliacus*) – Found flocks at the Palace Grounds in Armagh and at Glaslough(Castle Leslie).

SONG THRUSH (*Turdus philomelos*) – Found six out of the eight days in the field.

MISTLE THRUSH (*Turdus viscivorus*) – Found on days 1-4. Excellent views at Palace Grounds in Armagh.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Found every day and in good numbers. Also called the "druid" in Irish.

Prunellidae (Accentors)

DUNNOCK (*Prunella modularis*) – Found every day. The chocolate colored accentor with a gray head and face.

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

GRAY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla cinerea*) – Nice looks at definitely one and possibly two individuals at Dunmore East.

WHITE WAGTAIL (BRITISH) (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*) – Called the "Pied Wagtail" in Ireland. A more black and white thus "pied" form of the race *Motacilla alba yarrellii*. Black mantle on males and very dark gray mantle on females. Found every day and in many places.

MEADOW PIPIT (*Anthus pratensis*) – Found a minimum of four out of eight days in the field.

ROCK PIPIT (*Anthus petrosus*) – Found on day four-Dundalk Bay and Clogher Head.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

YELLOWHAMMER (*Emberiza citrinella*) – Found on day four, primarily in vicinity of Dundalk Bay.

REED BUNTING (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) – Found on day two in vicinity of Belfast Harbor.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

COMMON CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla coelebs*) – Found every day.

EURASIAN BULLFINCH (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) – Found on days one and four, with Santry Park and Dundalk Bay on the radar screen.

EUROPEAN GREENFINCH (*Chloris chloris*) – Found on day five at Wexford Slobs (Visitor Center).

EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH (*Carduelis carduelis*) – Found on four out of the eight days in the field-very spectacular bird.

EURASIAN LINNET (*Carduelis cannabina*) – Found four out of the eight days in the field. Areas like Belfast Harbor, Dundalk Bay, Rosslare Harbor, and North Slob come to mind.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Found on days four and five.

EURASIAN TREE SPARROW (*Passer montanus*) – Found on day four in vicinity of Dundalk Bay.

MAMMALS

EUROPEAN BROWN HARE (*Lepus europaeus*) – Found on day two.

NORTHERN (BLUE) HARE (*Lepus timidus*) – Several individuals of the "Irish Hare" at Wexford Slobs.

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – Found on the first three days of the tour.

MUSKRAT (*Ondatra zibethica*) – Found on day one in the vicinity of Belfast Harbor. [I]

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – Found on day six near Dunmore East.

GRAY SEAL (*Halichoerus grypus*) – Found on days four and five with Clogher Head and Rosslare Harbor coming to mind.

FALLOW DEER (*Dama dama*) – Observed on day eight at Phoenix Park in Dublin.

SIKA DEER (*Cervus nippon*) – Observed in a meadow (near a tree plantation) on day seven returning at dusk in vicinity of the town of Ring.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 100 bird taxa and 8 mammal taxa