



Field Guides Tour Report

BIRDING PLUS - Ireland in Fall: Birds, Traditional Music & Pubs 2018

Nov 1, 2018 to Nov 11, 2018
Terry McEneaney & Karen McEneaney

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



We saw the charming European Robin every day of the tour. Photo by participant Joe Demko.

Every time we travel to Ireland it is like going into an incredible dream. Yes, it is true the Emerald Isle is noted for its forty shades of green. But Ireland encompasses much more than just color -- it is a land of magic and mystery, of mythology and ancient history, of town and country, of nature and scenic grandeur, of humor and laughter, of music and song.

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, we get to experience interesting people and personalities coupled with Irish hospitality and birds, since everything shines through the Irish mist.

Most participants on this trip had never been to the Emerald Isle before, and even returnees were blown away by this land of enchantment. This particular Field Guides tour wasn't your ordinary tour of Ireland -- after all it is an insider's tour. Red Kites and a Common Swift 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, alcid, 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 some super, traditional Irish music sessions most nights. Folks heard we (Field Guides) were coming, so they went out of their way for us. Our best nights were at McCagues Pub in Scotstown (County Monaghan); Tossey's in County Armagh (Northern Ireland); followed by Lyons Bar (County Waterford) in the republic where a slug of musicians showed up to fill the room with their sound. Participants could not believe the number of Irish archeological sites, particularly the classics you find on the fall tour including Newgrange, Emain Macha or Navan Fort, and the Rock of Cashel. A bonus was visiting the Tommy Makem Visitor Center, and one of the traditional Irish music areas known as Keady, Ireland. Then there were the countless forts, castles, and round towers. In reality, the entire Emerald Isle is one large archeological site in some form or fashion.

But the highlight of the trip was a remote country session house called Tossey's Cottage. I contacted my relatives (the Makems) to let them know we were coming on the first Saturday of November, and they came out in full force. Some arrived from as far away as counties Cork and Tipperary. I counted more than 65 people in attendance. This is probably one of the best TIM (Traditional Irish Music) sessions one can get in all of Ireland. It is like going back in time. It was one of the best sessions I have ever experienced at Tossey's as well. Tossey's is reached by driving through several farmyards that lead to a cottage on a drumlin on a high vantage point that happens to have an ancient standing stone as well. What makes Tossey's unique is that it

offers Irish (relatives) hospitality coupled with incredible (TIM) music, singing, poetry, storytelling, and banter. Then the Makems came out with the sandwiches, which is a custom that dates back to the days of the matriarch and famous keeper of Irish songs Sarah Makem (first cousin of my grandmother). The music, poetry, storytelling, banter, and *craic* that night was one for the ages.

For the most part this was fairly good weather for Ireland in November, since November in Ireland seems to be getting more rain events in recent years rather than the typical Irish mist. The deciduous trees were some of the most brilliant we have ever seen, still holding their leaves, and the colors were similar to those found in New England. This was a very rare Ireland event, and it was Ireland at its best and truly outstanding. The unseasonably sensational weather allowed for the other activities such as visiting ancient archaeological sites, Irish pubs, and listening to traditional Irish music that much more meaningful. We ended up with 97 species of birds (96 seen) and seven species of mammals, which was predicted (90-100 species) for a fall Field Guides tour of Ireland this time of year. Our rarest mammal for the tour was a surfacing and blowing Common Minke Whale. Our rarest bird species for the tour included: Barnacle Goose, Arctic Loon, Carrion Crow, Red Kite, Purple Sandpiper, and a late-migrating Common Swift. The Common Swift was new for this fall tour. And luckily for us, stationary cold fronts positioned further north forced boreal migrants to slowly arrive in Ireland from faraway places like Iceland, Greenland, Russia, and Fennoscandia, particularly the likes Whooper Swan, Bar-tailed Godwit, Barnacle Goose, Greenland White-fronted Goose, and Redwing.

We returned home with many enjoyable memories and stories that incorporated Irish birds, music, landscapes, archaeological sites, pubs, and people into the conversation. But the key to visiting Ireland was to get off the beaten path, get off the tourist trail, watch Irish birds along the Irish Sea or in pastures of forty shades of green, and to 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, Monaghan, Keady, Belfast, Belfast Harbor, Wicklow Coast, Waterford, Wexford, Wexford Slobs, and Cobh and everything in between). We did just that, and that is why Field Guides' Birding Plus Ireland in Fall—Birds, Traditional Music and Pubs will always be referred to as one of the best birds by day /pubs by night experiences one can encounter while visiting Ireland.

Thank you for accompanying us on this magical mystery bird, pub, and music tour, and for allowing us the opportunity to show you Ireland as only the Irish know it.

In the meantime Slan! Stay safe! 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).

GRAYLAG GOOSE (*Anser anser*) – Found on days 3,4,6 -- Belfast Harbour, Dundalk Bay, and Ravenswood

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE (*Anser albifrons*) – Hundreds at Wexford Slobs

BRANT (*Branta bernicla*) – Observed thousands -- mainly at Dundalk Bay but also Ravenswood

BARNACLE GOOSE (*Branta leucopsis*) – Fewer than 50 individuals at Wexford Slobs

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*) – Common -- observed every day

WHOOPEER SWAN (*Cygnus cygnus*) – Found on days 3, 4, and 5 -- Lough Neagh, Dundalk Bay, and Wexford Slobs

COMMON SHELDUCK (*Tadorna tadorna*) – Found on days 3, 5, and 7 -- Belfast Harbour, Dundalk Bay, and Cobh

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Spatula clypeata*) – Wexford Slobs

GADWALL (*Mareca strepera*) – Dundalk Bay and Tullamore Pond

EURASIAN WIGEON (*Mareca penelope*) – Found by the dozens -- days 3, 4, 5, and 7

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Found every day and very common

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – Day 5 -- Wexford Slobs

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (*Anas crecca*) – Days 3, 4, 5 and 7 -- called the Eurasian Teal in Ireland -- male lacks vert. bar on neck

TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*) – Found on days 1 and 3 -- Sentry Pond and Belfast Harbour

COMMON SCOTER (*Melanitta nigra*) – Strings found flying along east coast on days 3, 4, and 5

COMMON GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala clangula*) – Found on days 4 and 5

COMMON MERGANSER (*Mergus merganser*) – Found on day 4 -- mainly around Avoca and Meeting of the Waters

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – Found on days 4 and 7

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies).

RING-NECKED PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*) – Found on day 4 -- very dark, almost black individuals -- Avoca

Podicipedidae (Grebes).

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) – Found 4 of 9 days in the field

GREAT CRESTED GREBE (*Podiceps cristatus*) – Found 3 of 9 days in the field

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves).

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Found every day (feral)

COMMON WOOD-PIGEON (*Columba palumbus*) – Observed every day

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Observed every day

Apodidae (Swifts).

COMMON SWIFT (*Apus apus*) – Day 6 (Nov.7) -- Ravenswood -- late migration date -- 1 individual

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots).

WATER RAIL (*Rallus aquaticus*) – Heard only on day 2 at Castle Leslie (County Monaghan) [*]

EURASIAN MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*) – Observed 5 of 9 days in the field

EURASIAN COOT (*Fulica atra*) – Found 4 of 9 days in the field

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers).

EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus ostralegus*) – Found 5 of 9 days in the field

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings).

EUROPEAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis apricaria*) – Well over 10,000 individuals in giant flocks on day 4 in particular

NORTHERN LAPWING (*Vanellus vanellus*) – Observed thousands -- Dundalk Bay

COMMON RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius hiaticula*) – Found 3 of 9 days in the field

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies).

EURASIAN CURLEW (*Numenius arquata*) – Found hundreds and 4 out of the 9 days in the field

BAR-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa lapponica*) – Least numerous of the two species, lighter, and smaller, and great migrant

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa limosa*) – Most numerous of the two species, darker, and larger, shorter-distance migrant

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – Found 4 of 9 days in the field

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – Found 3 of 9 days in the field

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – Large flocks -- found 4 of 9 days in the field

PURPLE SANDPIPER (*Calidris maritima*) – Found a few individuals at Kilmore Quay

COMMON SNIPE (*Gallinago gallinago*) – Found on day 3 -- Belfast Harbour

COMMON GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*) – Finally on day 7 on River Colligan

COMMON REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*) – Numerous -- days 3-7

Alcidae (Auks, Murres, and Puffins).

COMMON MURRE (*Uria aalge*) – Days 3-7, hundreds passing point at Kilmore Quay

RAZORBILL (*Alca torda*) – Day 4 -- Clogher Head

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers).

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*) – Day 5 -- pt. at Kilmore Quay

BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) – Numerous -- found every day

MEW GULL (*Larus canus*) – Days 5-7, especially Kilmore Quay

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – Days 3 and 4

HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*) – Numerous -- every day

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*) – Found days 3-7, more numerous as one heads farther south along coast

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*) – Days 4-7, common

Gaviidae (Loons).

RED-THROATED LOON (*Gavia stellata*) – Found on day 6 -- Ravenswood Beach

ARCTIC LOON (*Gavia arctica*) – Found on day 6 -- Ravenswood Beach

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – Found on days 5 and 6 -- Kilmore Quay and Ravenswood Beach

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets).

NORTHERN GANNET (*Morus bassanus*) – Found days 5 and 6 -- especially Kilmore Quay

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags).

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – Observed days 3-7

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns).

GRAY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*) – Found days 3-8

GREAT EGRET (EURASIAN) (*Ardea alba alba*) – Found on day 4 -- Dundalk Bay

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*) – Found many -- especially days 1, 4, 5, 7

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites).

EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter nisus*) – Found on days 3, 6, and 7

RED KITE (*Milvus milvus*) – Found several on day 4 -- in the vicinity of Avoca and Meeting of the Waters

COMMON BUZZARD (*Buteo buteo*) – Found nearly every day

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras).

EURASIAN KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) – Found on day 5

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – Found on day 4 -- Dundalk Bay

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies).

EURASIAN MAGPIE (*Pica pica*) – Observed every day

EURASIAN JACKDAW (*Corvus monedula*) – Observed every day

ROOK (*Corvus frugilegus*) – Observed every day

CARRION CROW (*Corvus corone*) – Found on days 3 and 6 - Belfast Harbour and Ravenswood

HOODED CROW (*Corvus cornix*) – Observed every day

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Observed on days 1 and 7

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice).

COAL TIT (BRITISH) (*Periparus ater hibernicus*) – Found on days 1-5 [E]

EURASIAN BLUE TIT (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) – Found on days 1-7

GREAT TIT (*Parus major*) – Found on days 1-6

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits).

LONG-TAILED TIT (*Aegithalos caudatus*) – Found on days 1-7

Certhiidae (Treecreepers).

EURASIAN TREECREEPER (*Certhia familiaris*) – Observed on day 1

Troglodytidae (Wrens).

EURASIAN WREN (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) – Basically found on days 1-5

Cinclidae (Dippers).

WHITE-THROATED DIPPER (*Cinclus cinclus hibernicus*) – Super looks on day 4 -- Meeting of the Waters [E]

Regulidae (Kinglets).

GOLDCREST (*Regulus regulus*) – Observed on days 1-4

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers).

EUROPEAN ROBIN (*Erithacus rubecula*) – Found every day

EUROPEAN STONECHAT (*Saxicola rubicola*) – Best looks on day 3

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies).

MISTLE THRUSH (*Turdus viscivorus*) – Found on days 3 and 5

SONG THRUSH (*Turdus philomelos*) – Observed on days 1-7

REDWING (*Turdus iliacus*) – On Day 2 we had our best view.

EURASIAN BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*) – Found nearly every day

Sturnidae (Starlings).

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Observed every day

Prunellidae (Accentors).

DUNNOCK (*Prunella modularis*) – Best looks on days 1 and 7

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits).

WHITE WAGTAIL (BRITISH) (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*) – Mainly days 1-7

MEADOW PIPIT (*Anthus pratensis*) – Found days 3-7

ROCK PIPIT (*Anthus petrosus*) – Found on days 4 and 5

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies).

COMMON CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla coelebs*) – Found on days 1-7

EURASIAN BULLFINCH (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) – Best look was day 6 at Ravenswood

EUROPEAN GREENFINCH (*Chloris chloris*) – Found on days 3-5

EURASIAN LINNET (*Linaria cannabina*) – Found on days 4-6

LESSER REDPOLL (*Acanthis cabaret*) – Day 3

EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH (*Carduelis carduelis*) – Found on days 1-3

Emberizidae (Old World Buntings).

REED BUNTING (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) – Best looks on day 4

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows).

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Observed every day

MAMMALS

EUROPEAN BROWN HARE (*Lepus europaeus*) – Found on day 3 -- several individuals near Belfast Harbour

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – Found on days 1, 2, and 3

NORWAY (BROWN) RAT (*Rattus norvegicus*) – Found on day 3 at Belfast Harbour

COMMON MINKE WHALE (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) – Day 6 at Dunmore East

HARBOR SEAL (*Phoca vitulina*) – Day 5 -- Kilmore Quay

GRAY SEAL (*Halichoerus grypus*) – Day 4 -- Clogher Head

FALLOW DEER (*Dama dama*) – Day 9 -- Phoenix Park Dublin

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 97 bird taxa and 7 mammal taxa