



Field Guides Tour Report

BIRDING PLUS - Ireland in Spring 2015

May 7, 2015 to May 17, 2015
Terry McEneaney & Karen McEneaney

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



Lough Leane in Killarney National Park (Photo by guide Karen McEneaney)

The tour started out nearly pouring rain all day, a guide's nightmare. But knowing that "it doesn't rain in a pub," our options were good. Despite this initial setback, our spirits remained strong, and it paid off. At our first major birding destination, the rain stopped long enough for our group to get three separate and sensational views of a Red Grouse. We observed a male twice in flight and once head-periscoping above the heather. Then the downpour started. The Red Grouse was our first bit of our good luck, or "adh mor ort" as they say in Irish. Although it continued to rain, the day just got better with the presence of a rainbow and an unplanned visit to the Dublin coast and finally a visit to a very accommodating pub in Newtown Kennedy. Although we braved the rain our first day, the sun (or "grian") was on our side and came out quite often --almost every day (quite uncommon in Ireland and frankly quite shocking!).

We ended up with 96 species of birds and nine species of mammals, about par for this particular May tour. Highlight birds included nice views of Red Kites circulating overhead and Common Cuckoos calling and defending territories. We had super close views of White-throated Dippers and a Greater Whitethroat. The seabird watching was sensational -- we watched Northern Gannets plunge-diving, and tens of thousands of seabirds bringing in food to young and mates. Other interesting behaviors including the acrobatic movements and tumbles of Red-billed Choughs, Hooded Crows flying up and dropping clams to the ground to open them up, and copy-cat behavior of a Herring Gull trying to do the same thing to a golf ball.

The hidden secrets of this tour are that we travel Ireland off the beaten path and before the tourist season begins, and we hang around people from Ireland. We had some of the best traditional Irish music found anywhere in Ireland this time of year. Other than birds, the pubs are the keystone to any tour of Ireland. These were as varied as the music, from conversational pubs to singing pubs and those strictly instrumental. The instrumental sessions varied from Uilleann pipes and accordions to banjos and guitars to fiddles. We passed dozens of ancient castles, round towers, abbeys, stone bridges, round forts, passage graves, and standing stones. History is written everywhere in Ireland, and nature is right out the window or doorstep. We visited two national parks -- Wicklow Mountains and Killarney -- and witnessed some of the prettiest landscapes and seascapes Ireland has to offer.

In summary, it was a quintessential Ireland tour involving great *craic* ("great fun") with a combination of super weather, ample birds, quaint pubs, fabulous countryside, memorable traditional Irish music, not to mention delicious gourmet food. But it is the Irish people that make this tour so memorable with their warm and welcoming hospitality. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to show you Ireland as we know it, and we hope to see you again in future Field Guides tours.

In the meantime, *Slán Abhaile* (Safe home)!

Terry and Karen 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)

GRAYLAG GOOSE (*Anser anser*) – Observed slightly less than a dozen-Lady's Island Lake.

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*) – Found every day.

COMMON SHELDUCK (*Tadorna tadorna*) – Found on 6 of 9 days in the field.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – A pair found on day 2-Lady's Island Lake.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Found every day.

TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*) – Found on day 2-Lady's Island Lake.

GREATER SCAUP (*Aythya marila*) – Found on day 2-Lady's Island Lake.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

RING-NECKED PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*) – Found nearly every day. These are the really dark morph, from a distance they look dark. [I]

WILLOW PTARMIGAN (RED GROUSE) (*Lagopus lagopus scotica*) – A great find. One individual seen three times: two times flying, once on ground head periscoping, and also calling. [E]

Gaviidae (Loons)

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – Found on four separate days-all along the coast and in some form of breeding plumage.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) – Found at a minimum of three of the nine days in the field.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE (*Podiceps cristatus*) – Found on two of the nine days in the field.

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

NORTHERN FULMAR (*Fulmarus glacialis*) – Found on four of the nine days in the field.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

NORTHERN GANNET (*Morus bassanus*) – Found on four of the nine days in the field. Excellent views from above of the classic plunge-diving behavior.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

GREAT CORMORANT (NORTH ATLANTIC) (*Phalacrocorax carbo carbo*) – Observed every day.

EUROPEAN SHAG (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*) – Found on four of the nine days in the field.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

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

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*) – Found on eight of the nine days in the field.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter nisus*) – Fleeting glimpses of this bird of day three-Wicklow Mountains.

RED KITE (*Milvus milvus*) – Super views of this impressive raptor that is suspended in the air like a kite, hence the name. Stunning views of a minimum of two and perhaps as many as four individuals.

COMMON BUZZARD (*Buteo buteo*) – Great views of this buteo on days 1-3.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

WATER RAIL (*Rallus aquaticus*) – Mostly heard by entire group-but seen by a few lucky individuals on day 8 at Shannon Estuary.

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

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

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus ostralegus*) – Found on eight of the nine days in the field.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – Found one individual on day 5-Portmagee.

COMMON GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*) – Found on day one-North Bull Island-Dublin.

COMMON REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*) – Found on four of the nine days in the field.

WHIMBREL (EUROPEAN) (*Numenius phaeopus phaeopus*) – Found five of the nine days in the field. Totaling dozens.

EURASIAN CURLEW (*Numenius arquata*) – Found on two of the nine days in the field.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa limosa*) – Found on two of the nine days in the field.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – Found on day 1-North Bull Island area of Dublin.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – Shannon estuary-day8.

COMMON SNIPE (*Gallinago gallinago*) – Found on the first two days of the tour.

Alcidae (Auks, Murres, and Puffins)

COMMON MURRE (*Uria aalge*) – Tens of thousands on day nine - Cliffs of Moher.

RAZORBILL (*Alca torda*) – A few dozen-Cliffs of Moher.

BLACK GUILLEMOT (*Cepphus grylle*) – Found mainly on day five--Portmagee.

ATLANTIC PUFFIN (*Fratercula arctica*) – Dozens seen at nesting burrows--hundreds flying-Cliffs of Moher.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*) – Hundreds seen nesting on cliff ledges-Cliffs of Moher.

BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) – Found every day.

MEW GULL (EUROPEAN) (*Larus canus canus*) – Found on days one and seven-just a few individuals. Also called the Common Gull.

HERRING GULL (EUROPEAN) (*Larus argentatus argenteus*) – Found every day. Very common. Recently split and slightly different plumage than the American Herring Gull (*L. smithsonianus*) which has a lighter mantle and younger age classes darker.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (GRAELLSII) (*Larus fuscus graellsii*) – Found on seven of the nine days in the field. Of the graellsii race which is a little more robust in proportion and has a slaty-gray almost charcoal mantle.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*) – Found every day.

COMMON TERN (COMMON) (*Sterna hirundo hirundo*) – Found on the first two days.

ARCTIC TERN (*Sterna paradisaea*) – Found on the first two days--North Bull Island and Lady's Island Lake.

SANDWICH TERN (EURASIAN) (*Thalasseus sandvicensis sandvicensis*) – Found on days two and nine.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

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

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

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Found every day. One was nesting at Curran's Pub in Dingle on May 13, 2015.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

COMMON CUCKOO (*Cuculus canorus*) – Observed on days 5 and 9. Heard on day 8. Great views of this bird on a stone wall at Poul nabrone.

Apodidae (Swifts)

COMMON SWIFT (*Apus apus*) – Found on five of the nine days in the field.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

COMMON KINGFISHER (*Alcedo atthis*) – On the coast of California they have the green flash, this is Ireland's version called the "blue flash". Fleeting glimpses on day four.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

EURASIAN KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) – Found on four of nine days in the field. Great looks at Dingle Peninsula.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – Found on days two and nine.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

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

RED-BILLED CHOUGH (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*) – Found on days 5,6,7, and 9. Great flyers.

EURASIAN JACKDAW (*Corvus monedula*) – Found every day.

ROOK (*Corvus frugilegus*) – Found every day.

HOODED CROW (*Corvus cornix*) – Found every day.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Found seven of nine days in the field.

Alaudidae (Larks)

SKY LARK (*Alauda arvensis*) – Found on seven of the nine days in the field. Mainly aerial displays.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – Found on day three near Middleton.

BARN SWALLOW (WHITE-BELLIED) (*Hirundo rustica rustica*) – Found every day.

COMMON HOUSE-MARTIN (*Delichon urbicum*) – Found every day.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

COAL TIT (BRITISH) (*Parus ater hibernicus*) – Found on three of the nine days in the field of the Irish race hibernicus with underparts and cheeks yellowish. [E]

GREAT TIT (*Parus major*) – Found majority of the days-heard every day.

EURASIAN BLUE TIT (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) – Found nearly every day.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

EURASIAN WREN (BRITISH) (*Troglodytes troglodytes indigenus*) – Found every day.

Cinclididae (Dippers)

WHITE-THROATED DIPPER (*Cinclus cinclus hibernicus*) – Marvelous looks at this stunning bird on three of nine days in the field. Found it flying and standing and very close to us at times. Of the race hibernicus --In Britain/Ireland brownish on head with rusty-brown below bib. One of the highlight birds of the tour with super and numerous views. [E]

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDCREST (*Regulus regulus*) – Found on days two and eight.

Phylloscopidae (Leaf-Warblers)

WILLOW WARBLER (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) – Found nearly every day except days 1 and 9.

COMMON CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus collybita*) – Found on days 3,4,5.

Acrocephalidae (Reed-Warblers and Allies)

SEDGE WARBLER (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*) – Found on days 3-9.

Locustellidae (Grassbirds and Allies)

LANCEOLATED WARBLER (*Locustella lanceolata*) – Formerly called the "Grasshopper Warbler" due to its sound now called the Lanceolated Warbler. Now in a family of grassbirds and allies Locustellidae.

Sylviidae (Sylviid Warblers)

BLACKCAP (*Sylvia atricapilla*) – Found many on days 2 and 4.

GREATER WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia communis*) – Found in the Burren and close views.

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

EUROPEAN ROBIN (*Erithacus rubecula*) – Found every day-a darling of a bird.

EUROPEAN STONECHAT (*Saxicola rubicola rubicola*) – Found on 6 of 9 days in the field and many.

NORTHERN WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) – Found on 4 of 9 days in the field.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EURASIAN BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*) – Found every day-numerous.

SONG THRUSH (*Turdus philomelos*) – Observed every day and singing a fabulous song.

MISTLE THRUSH (*Turdus viscivorus*) – Found at least 5 of 9 days in the field.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Found every day and numerous.

Prunellidae (Accentors)

DUNNOCK (*Prunella modularis*) – Found every day and common.

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

GRAY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla cinerea*) – Found on days 2-6.

WHITE WAGTAIL (BRITISH) (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*) – Found every day and numerous--of the Pied race yarrellii unique to Ireland and Britain.

MEADOW PIPIT (*Anthus pratensis*) – Found every day.

ROCK PIPIT (*Anthus petrosus*) – Found on days 3,4,and 7.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

YELLOWHAMMER (*Emberiza citrinella*) – Seen by a few in the group-Druids Glen.

REED BUNTING (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) – Found on days 3,7, and 8.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

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

EUROPEAN GREENFINCH (*Chloris chloris*) – Found on 6 of 9 days in the field. Stunning views of this fringillid.

EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH (*Carduelis carduelis*) – Nice views everyday.

EURASIAN LINNET (*Carduelis cannabina*) – Seen most days with one day stunning views.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Found every day.

MAMMALS

OLD WORLD RABBIT (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) – Found on days 3 and 5-8.

NORTHERN (BLUE) HARE (*Lepus timidus*) – Found on day 9.

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – Found on day 8 on the Shannon River.

STOAT (SHORT-TAILED WEASEL) (*Mustela erminea*) – Crossing the road on a couple of occasions--seen by part of the group each time.

EUROPEAN RIVER OTTER (*Lutra lutra*) – Great year for observing the European River Otter-mainly in Killarney NP, but also near Tralee.

HARBOR SEAL (*Phoca vitulina*) – Found on days 1 and 2.

GRAY SEAL (*Halichoerus grypus*) – Found on day seven looking at Blasket Islands.

SIKA DEER (*Cervus nippon*) – Days 5 and 6 --Killarney NP.

RED DEER (*Cervus elaphus*) – Days 4,5,6 Killarney NP and out the window of the hotel in Killarney.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 96 bird taxa and 9 mammal taxa