Species Report for Lough Beg 2018

Ducks, Geese and Swans (Anatidae)

Mute Swan (Cygnus olor)

Common resident

Irregular visitor until the installation of a sluice assembly in 1986 allowed winter water levels to be increased. Since then, recorded every year and in all months. Has nested on the islands on the lagoon but, although every year cygnets have hatched, most broods lost by mid-August. Reasons unknown, but may be perdition by fox, otter or mink? 2018 the most successful year, with a pair raising 7 cygnets – single cygnet still with parent pair in January, 2019.

Pale-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota)

Common Winter visitor

Although there are only three records prior to 2005, Lough Beg has shared in the increase of wintering birds along the south coast of Ireland. Flocks of 20 – 40 are now regular on the seaward side and mudflats between October and April. A large pre-migration flock built up on the estuary in the last week of March, 2018, peaking at a reserve high count of 82 on 27th.

Black Brant (Branta bernicla nigricans)

North American vagrant

Single sighting of this North American race of the Brent Goose on 6th January, 2010. May go unrecorded in any of the many Brent Goose flocks now occurring in the Harbour every winter.

Canada Goose (Branta canadensis)

Vagrant

Although there are feral flocks of Canada Geese on The Lough, Cork City and in the wildlife park in Fota, this is a rare visitor to Lough Beg. Except for a group of ~ six birds seen between August 1998 and March 1999, other sightings have been of single birds or pairs – with the last recorded in March 2005.

Greylag Goose (Anser anser)

Vagrant

Ironically, this is the species that possibly triggered the desire to conserve the lagoon as a reserve, when a group of three wintered between November 1979 and March 1980. Unfortunately, the only subsequent record is of one seen on 20th – 22nd August 2008, this time on the estuary.

Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra)

Vagrant

Single unattributed record in late March 2007 in the Lough Beg Logbook.

Common Goldeneye (Bucephala clangula)

Vagrant

A number of sightings of what must have been the same female between early November 1998 and late January 1999, accompanied by a male on 5th December, comprise the only reserve record.

Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator)

Common winter visitor

Regularly seen offshore, singly and in small flocks, recorded as early as October and as late as May. Peak count 22 birds on 8th March, 1997.

Common Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna)

Resident and common winter visitor

Resident, with numbers supplemented by wintering birds. Recorded in every month, with counts of >100 regular between October and April. Peak count was 387 birds, noted in the Cork Bird Report for 2nd January, 1982.

Breeding in the lagoon has previously allowed observation of crèche behaviour, where adult birds are seen in charge of large nurseries of ducklings in summer, after most adults have left to carry out their annual moult in the North Sea. One such observation was on 23rd June, 1986 where a single female was minding 28 chicks, whilst another adult pair minded 14. Another saw two adults looking after 35 chicks on 21st June 1980. This behaviour has certainly become much less frequent.

Common Pochard (Aythya ferina)

Vagrant

Not a common bird in south Cork, anyway, the lack of underwater vegetation has probably restricted reserve sightings to three individuals; 5th April, 2006, 27th January, 2008 and 27th February – 3rd March, 2015.

Tufted Duck (Aythya fuligula)

Scarce winter and spring visitor

More common in south Cork than Pochard, and this is reflected in reserve records.

Sightings sporadic up to 2007, with only 14 birds recorded since 1980, but more regular since then.

A mid-summer bloom of weed in the middle of the lagoon in 2011 seemed to attract in a flock of eclipse males, with a peak of 6 birds on 21st July and the following year two pairs and a lonely male were present from 22nd April – 6th May. This reduced to a pair from then, with copulation observed on 16th May, but then only the male was seen to end-July. Possible breeding record? Recorded annually since then.

Greater Scaup (Aythya marila)

Vagrant

This sea duck is regarded as a scarce winter visitor to Cork Harbour. Two orthodox sightings of an adult female on 21st September, 1980, and an immature female from 21st October – 24th November, 2012. A more unusual sighting was of a pair seen on the lagoon on 7th June, 1982.

Garganey (Spatula querquedula)

Rare Spring passage migrant

Any Teal-sized duck seen in late spring / early summer is worth checking out for this unique summer vagrant. Seven of eight sightings of pristine males were made between late April and early June (no females recorded, possibly an identification challenge for the average birder!). There is however a single Autumn record of a female / juvenile on 18th October 2009.

Northern Shoveler (Spatula clypeata)

Common Winter visitor

One of the species that have benefitted most from the management of higher water levels in the lagoon between November and April. Prior to 1996, records were limited to occasional sightings after heavy rains increasing lagoon water levels temporarily. Since then sightings have been annual, and increasing – with a peak count of 39 birds on 4th March, 2007. Pairs remaining well into April, and a pair lingering to 3rd May, 2013 hinted at possible breeding.

This species also gives us one of the earliest documented records from the site, with 9 birds reported on 26th December, 1967!

Gadwall (Mareca strepera)

Common Winter visitor

As with Shoveler, this duck has moved from Rare to Common with the controlled water levels. Only one record prior to 2004, and that a pair on the unusual date of 21st August, the bird is now common from late November to early April. 2011 and 2012 were peak years, with counts reaching almost 20 on a number of occasions, some evidence of a decline since then.

Eurasian Wigeon (Mareca penelope)

Common Winter visitor

Although regarded as a winter visitor, has actually been seen in every month, except June. High counts in 1979 – 1981, with a peak of 472 on 1st March, 1981, replaced with much more modest numbers more recently, with grazing flocks in the tens, rather than hundreds. Restoration of the meadows will certainly reverse this trend.

Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos)

Common resident

As with any area of water in Ireland, the reserve hosts this duck through all seasons, with flock counts of 50 - 60. Species breeds on the reserve, and the emergent ducklings are one of the first signs of new lives each year. However, for this species, the highlight is possibly the annual post breeding moulting flock that occupies the lagoon, which bring counts up to 200, with a peak of 247 on 16th August, 1989.

Northern Pintail (Anas acuta)

Rare winter visitor

This stunning duck is an occasional visitor, with only one record prior to 2004, on 20th December, 1998. Slight increase since then, with two pairs gracing the reserve through December 2006, and a single female / immature on 14th August, 2009. A pair were present in early October, 2013, photographed on 14th. One pair, first seen in early March, were still present on 9th April, 2016 – another teasing hint at future possible breeding? One bird observed flying into the reserve from the harbour on 13th September, 2016.

Eurasian Teal (Anas crecca crecca)

Common Winter visitor

Recorded in all months, but never suspected of breeding in the reserve. Primarily a winter visitor, returning birds can be seen as early as mid-June and linger to early May. Mid-winter counts of ~100 are regular, with a peak count of 220 on 28th September, 1996.

Green-winged Teal (Anas carolinensis)

Rare North American Winter visitor

Between 1989 and 2016 there were seven separate sets of sightings, with more than one bird recorded only once, on 20th January, 1990, when two were seen. Difficult enough to pick out the drake in the larger flocks of the similar Eurasian Teal with which it mingles, all sightings have been males – so almost certainly under-recorded, as the female is almost identical to female Teal. Many have been long-stayers, with the 1989 bird present from 19th May to at least 1st July (seen with a drake Garganey in early June), and one of the 1990 birds, seen between 19th January to 4th March and possibly the same bird between 18th October through to 29th January, 1991. Finally, it is possible that the bird first seen on 27th October, 2015 lingered through to a final sighting on 19th March, 2016.

Partridges, Pheasants, Grouse (Phasianidae)

Ring-necked Pheasant [sp] (Phasianus colchicus)

Common resident

Resident gamebird, seen and heard all year round. Nests on the reserve. Numbers supplemented annually by releases by the local gun club. Beautiful very pale female seen opposite hide throughout Spring of 1987.

Grebes (Podicipedidae)

Little Grebe [sp] (Tachybaptus ruficollis)

Common resident

Yet another waterbird whose status has changed from rare winter visitor to common resident with the improvement in winter water level controls. Prior to 1996 there were only four records of birds during flooding after heavy rains. However, now breeds annually on the reserve, with numbers exceeding 20 on many occasions - peak counts of 29 on 28th August, 2011, and 25 on 7th October, 2018.

Great Crested Grebe (Podiceps cristatus)

Common winter visitor

Large flocks often seen in winter off Currabinny Wood, but sometimes seen singly or in pairs from the causeway, especially after storms. Peak count of 81 on 15th February, 1992.

Slavonian Grebe (Podiceps auritus)

Rare winter visitor

Records of singles or small groups on the sea on various dates between 1993 and 2008. Irregular, with peak counts of three birds on 1st January, 1993 and 16th February, 2008.

Black-necked Grebe (Podiceps nigricollis)

Vagrant

Single sighting from the hill on the north side of Currabinny Wood during an IWeBS count on 16th February 2013 is the only occurrence.

Doves and Pigeons (Columbidae)

Feral Pigeon (Columba livia ''feral'')

Resident

It will come as somewhat of a surprise that there is only two sightings of this species documented for the reserve in over 40 years of observation, even though the bird is common at the nearby Ringaskiddy shipping terminal! Absence of cereal farming in the area, and no food processing facilities nearby might explain it. First sighting was a flock of 20 birds on 19th September, 1998, and a second record of 3 birds on 7th April, 2017 - but certainly underrecorded! Birds seen regularly in winter 2018 / 2019.

Stock Dove (Columba oenas)

Scarce resident

Seen in most years in small groups, often attracted to newly worked ground. Suspected of breeding locally, peak count of 14 birds on 23rd July, 1998 far surpasses any other counts.

Woodpigeon (Columba palumbus)

Common resident

So commonplace that most observers would not even include it in visit lists. However, there is one notable record of c.200 birds on 21st September, 1997.

Swifts (Apodidae)

Common Swift (Apus apus)

Common Summer visitor

Recent years have produces only single figure daily totals for what was once a common bird seen feeding frantically over the lagoon and along the causeway. Always the last of the summer visitors to arrive (normally by 1st May) and certainly the first to depart (usually by 10th August), there are earliest dates of 21st April in both 2002 and 2007, and late dates of 1st September, 1985 and 6th September, 1997. Peak count was c.60 birds over Currabinny Woods on 16th July, 1997.

Cuckoos (Cuculidae)

Common Cuckoo (Cuculus canorus)

Vagrant

Only two records of calling birds in Currabinny Wood on Spring passage in 1985 and 1987. Very scarce in Co. Cork.

Rails, Crakes & Coots (Rallidae)

European Water Rail (Rallus aquaticus)

Common resident

Nearly every visit to the reserve will include hearing the pig-like squeal of this secretive species, but the bird is rarely seen. Lough Beg is one of the most reliable locations in Co. Cork to record this waif! Recorded in all months, and breeds in the reserve, but the highest estimated count was of five birds on 14th October, 2010. Certainly under recorded and population size almost impossible to determine.

Spotted Crake (Porzana porzana)

Vagrant

Single reserve record of a bird present from 26th August to 10th September, 1990. Habitat suitable for this rare migrant, so may be under recorded.

Common Moorhen (Gallinula chloropus)

Common resident

Recorded throughout the year, with no evidence of any annual peak or trough. Certainly breeds in the reserve. Peak count of 30 on 3rd February, 2001. A very distinctive leucistic bird was present from May, 1996 to at least February 1999. Partial albino bird seen on 5th October, 2003.

Common Coot (Fulica atra)

Common resident

Another of the waterbirds that have moved from vagrant (only three recorded prior to 1998) to common resident, once winter water levels were increased. Now proved to breed in the reserve. Peak count of 12 birds on 7th November, 2004, usual tallies are mid to high single figures.

Divers/Loons (Gaviidae)

Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer)

Rare winter visitor

Only three observations noted, a single bird close in to Currabinny Wood on 16th November, 1991 (which was still in summer plumage), a group of three (two adults and a juvenile) on various dates in January 2012, and a single bird on 13th February, and possibly the same bird still present between 23rd April and 4th May, 2018. More often seen from nearby Luc Strand fishing in mid-harbour.

Petrels, Shearwaters (Procellariidae)

Northern Fulmar (Fulmarus glacialis)

Vagrant

Although Fulmar breed along the Cork coast, there is only one record in the reserve area. This was a single bird seen off Currabinny Wood on 26th October, 1996. Almost certainly under recorded.

Herons, Egrets and Bitterns (Ardeidae)

Cattle Egret (Bubulcus ibis)

Rare Winter visitor

Five separate records of this European heron from the reserve. The first was of three in a nearby field on 30th March, 2008 (these were some of the 161 birds recorded in Ireland in 2007 / 2008, of which 79 were in Co. Cork). Single bird recorded on 15th February and four reported on 24th March, 2009 feeding with cattle nearby. Single birds seen in November 2014, April 2015 and January, 2017, before a flock of nine, seen on 12th March, 2017, increased to 11 by 4th April and demonstrating breeding plumage prompted hopes of colonisation. Alas, a singleton on 8th April was the only subsequent sighting.

Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea)

Common resident

To this bird falls the honour of the earliest reference to Lough Beg / Currabinny Wood in bird reports, with two nests reported in the heronry in the woods on 8th April, 1964! This heronry is probably the source of the birds seen regularly feeding along the fringes and feeder streams of the lagoon, and in the channels on the mudflats. Previously, the reserve area was noted for the ground roosts of Grey Heron, which were regular up to 1995, with a maximum of 31 birds on 26th October, 1985. This was before a lack of grazing and the impact of encroaching reeds and rushes grew over the favoured roost locations. Observations are now limited to <10 birds, feeding in the lagoon, or roosting on the offshore island or below the Wood. Count of 18 on 17th April, 2018 included seven roosting in the Donkey Field, along the boundary to the Shingle Beach.

Purple Heron (Ardea purpurea)

Vagrant

Two sightings of this European heron; the first was a 1st Summer bird seen on 5th June, 1999, and the second seen on 1st October, 2015.

Great Egret (Ardea alba)

Vagrant

A single observation, probably of an individual present in east Cork Harbour since mid-2008, reported on 24th May, 2009.

Little Egret (Egretta garzetta)

Common resident

It is difficult now to imagine that the first sighting of this white heron in the reserve on 10th May, 1981 was a local, if not national, rarity! Since then, this species has colonised UK and Ireland, and is a regular sighting in the reserve. Now proven to breed in Currabinny Wood, this must be a nearby source that allows counts of 20+ to be unremarkable. For the record, peak count was between 28 - 34 birds from 1st to 15th September, 2007

Ibises and Spoonbills (Threskiornithidae)

Eurasian Spoonbill (Platalea leucorodia)

Vagrant

Single record of a 2nd Summer bird videoed on the mudflats on 22nd June, 2007. Bird later observed in Wexford between 27th June and 12th August

Glossy Ibis (Plegadis falcinellus)

Vagrant

Another bird with only a single observation at Lough Beg before relocating elsewhere! Bird seen on 7th March, 1981 became a long-staying guest at Ballycotton from 4th April, 1981 to 8th May, 1983.

Gannets, Boobies (Sulidae)

Northern Gannet (Morus bassanus)

Common

Birds regularly observed from the shingle beach feeding in mid-harbour.

Cormorants, Shags (Phalacrocoracidae)

European Shag (Phalacrocorax aristotelis)

Vagrant

Surprisingly uncommon in Cork Harbour, given that it nests in reasonable numbers along the outer Cork coast. Only one noted observation, that of two birds below the wood on 25th February, 1996.

Great Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo)

Common

Regularly seen roosting on the offshore island, fishing both in the lagoon and on the sea. Birds have been seen take eels of ~60cms. within the lagoon. Peak count of 18 on 18th October, 1981.

Oystercatchers (Haematopodidae)

Eurasian Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus)

Common winter visitor

Recorded in all months. A species that is reported infrequently, but probably because of its constant presence. Now seen feeding on mudflats on filling or ebbing tides, but prior to 1990 was a major constituent of the high tide roosts opposite the hide. Earlier peak counts of 344 on 9th September, 1990 and 280 birds on 15th September, 2007 was specifically noted as being on the seaward side. More recent peaks have been 412 on 18th September, 2014, 430 on 22nd August, 2017 and 302 on 17th April and 380 on 30th September, 2018.

Stilts, Avocets (Recurvirostridae)

Pied Avocet (Recurvirostra avosetta)

Vagrant

Single record of this stunning wader at Lough Beg was of a juvenile on 15th November until 4th December, 1983.

Plovers and Lapwings (Charadriidae)

Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola)

Common Winter visitor

Never recorded from inside on the lagoon shoreline, this dapper wader is a regular feeder on the mudflats, albeit usually in single figures. Seems to prefer a more sandy substrate, and is more reliably seen on the nearby Luc Strand. Some evidence of an overall decline, as all the peak counts are pre-1885; for example, 71 on 8th December, 1991, 65 on 1st January, 1989 and 44 on 6th January, 1991.

Eurasian Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria)

Rare Winter visitor

What a difference two decades can make! From a situation where flocks recorded in Cork Harbour Counts in the 1970’s and 80’s were estimated to the nearest ‘000, with a peak of ~5,000 birds on 1st March, 1981, flocks in the 90’s were in hundreds, and the last recorded sighting was a singleton on 20th September, 2003. A pretty spectacular decline.

American Golden Plover (Pluvialis dominica)

North American Vagrant

A single record on 28th August, 2004 is the only sighting in the report area.

Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula)

Common Winter visitor

Although this species seems to prefer a more sandy environment, reasonably sized flocks are often seen feeding along the receding tideline or at the shingle beach. Peak count of ~200 birds on 17th September, 2010, but more likely flock size would be 15 – 50 birds. Pair were proved breeding on the nearby Luc Strand in 1996, but frequent disturbance probably precludes a repeat.

Northern Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus)

Scarce Winter visitor

Commentary reads very similar to that for Golden Plover. A peak count of ~1,550 on 2nd January, 1982, but flocks numbering hundreds were frequently seen on the mudflats in winter, up to the mid-00’s – so much so that the species was probably under recorded at this time. Now flocks greater than 25 are unusual.

Sandpipers (Scolopacidae)

Eurasian Whimbrel (Numenius phaeopus)

Common Spring and Autumn passage migrant and, recently, Scarce Winter visitor

The area to the east of the hide, now a carpark, was once a football pitch. Here, the Whimbrel frequently lived up to its country name of May Bird, with large migrating flocks touching down for a few hours before recommencing their flight to Iceland. Peak count was of 133 birds on 27th April, 1980, with a number of other records of flocks >50 birds in April / May,. but the loss of the grass to tarmacadam has eliminated this spectacle. More recent highlights have been 139 on 29th April, 2017 and 119 on 2nd May, 2018.

Mysteriously, the return migration is marked with lower counts out on the mudflats, rarely >10 birds, between July and September, with birds more often heard than seen. In the past few years there have been occurrences of single wintering birds on the western side of Cork Harbour, with Lough Beg one of the sites frequented.

Eurasian Curlew (Numenius arquata)

Common Spring and Autumn passage migrant and winter visitor

A very common denizen of both the reserve area and the mudflats. Large flocks are frequently seen, with >400 birds unremarkable. Was once a common component, with Redshank and Black-tailed Godwit, of the large autumnal high tide roosts that formed in front of the hide. Certainly so common as to be under recorded.

Interesting ringing recoveries give us some idea of where the birds come from but, more interestingly, a number of controls indicate a large element of site fidelity for “our” birds (see Ringing Summary Report).

Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica)

Scarce Autumn passage migrant and Winter visitor

An uncommon wader in Cork Harbour, sightings of >20 birds are the exception in the report area. Very different in habitat preference to the next species, to which it is closely related.

Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa)

Common Spring and Autumn passage migrant and winter visitor

In many ways, the marquee bird of the reserve. Recorded in all months, this elegant wader can be seen roosting on the reserve shore fringes, or in the local fields, or feeding on the mudflats, or along the outlet creek. Has reached National Importance totals, particularly in Autumn. Up to 10 years ago, counts >400 were regular in the roost opposite the hide, until the encroaching club rush made such agglomerations impossible. A peak count of ~800 on 10th September, 2007 was exceptional. A more recent peak was an evening high tide roost of 545 birds on 13th April, 2018, loafing on the spit below the plant (location always difficult to census).

A number of birds have been trapped and ringed in the reserve, but the species is also the subject of a long standing European colour ringing project, and repeated sightings of a number of specific individuals has helped to establish migration routes and important feeding and roosting areas. Also, these repeat sightings have confirmed, as with Redshank and Curlew, a high degree of site fidelity, even amongst highly migratory waders.

Ruddy Turnstone (Arenaria interpres)

Common Autumn passage migrant and winter visitor

Because this is more a species of rocky shoreline, it is rarely seen in the reserve lagoon (single exception on 9th September, 2007), or on the mudflats, but a walk along the northern shoreline will almost always lift small numbers of this little charmer. Flocks >15 are unusual, and peaks of 33 birds on 12th October, 1986 and 39 on 30th September, 2018 were exceptional. Very occasionally, summer plumaged individuals have been seen, both here and more likely on the nearby Luc Strand. Single ringed bird spotted on 18th October, 1996 was presumed by the observer to be of Swedish origin.

Red Knot (Calidris canutus)

Scarce Autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.

This is a species that was very scarce in Cork Harbour as anything other than a passage migrant, up to the middle 90’s. Normally seen singly, or small flocks <10, with one peak count of 37 on 5th October, 2008. However, from 1995 on, counts of wintering birds began to be reported, starting with 1995/96 when a flock of up to 15 birds was counted. Since then this wader is as likely to be seen wintering on the mudflats as when passing through between July and October.

Ruff (Calidris pugnax)

Scarce passage migrant and rare winter visitor

Singles, or small groups seen most years, particularly in August and September. Peak count of 9 birds, back on 7th October, 1976 – when the lagoon shoreline was optimal for attracting migrating waders, but more recent records are more likely to be 1 – 2 individuals.

Pairs seen between 14th February and 25th March (increasing to four individuals between 7th and 15th), 1982, 27th February to 17th April 1983 and three birds seen on 12th / 13th January, 1984 hinted at possible occasional overwintering, but only one winter record since, on 21st – 23rd January, 2001. Another pair, seen between 26th April and 20th May, 1985, showed the male beginning to display the start of the beautiful neck adornment that gives this species its name.

Stilt Sandpiper (Calidris himantopus)

North American Vagrant

A single bird present between 7th and 10th August, 2003 was a major visitor attraction to the reserve for a few days!

Curlew Sandpiper (Calidris ferruginea)

Scarce autumn passage migrant

Small groups of this wader were regular up to the mid-00’s, with guaranteed sightings between mid-September to early October. A sizeable flock of up to 20 birds seen and photographed in mid-September, 1988 included a Norwegian ringed individual. Since then, records have been of smaller flocks or individuals, with some years producing no sightings at all.

Sanderling (Calidris alba)

Vagrant

This wader is almost exclusively found along the tideline of a sandy shore, so it is not surprising that there is only one record for the report area, with a singleton reported on 5th September, 1991. Probably under recorded, as small numbers are seen at the nearby, but much more suitable, Luc Strand in both Spring and Autumn.

Dunlin (Calidris alpina)

Common Spring and Autumn passage migrant and Winter visitor

The common little “peep” of the Irish coastline, this bird is common in all months except, perhaps, May and June. Peak counts would hark back to pre-1992, with flocks estimated in ‘000s, peak of ~2,500 on 26th January, 1992, but since then more modest ‘00s are recorded. Because of size and leg length, the first of the common waders to abandon the traditional wader roost opposite the hide, and the return of the Dunlin to the roost would be a good success criterion for any remediation works planned into the future. There have been a number of recoveries and controls of Dunlin passing through Lough Beg.

Little Stint (Calidris minuta)

Scarce Autumn passage migrant

All records of this tiny “peep” are in late August through to end October. Normally singletons or small groups, there have been two more substantive observations, with 12 birds on 21st September, 1996 and 10 on 3rd October, 1976. Like Curlew Sandpiper, sightings have declined over the past few years, with only one record since 1996, that of a single individual on 25th September, 2004. The increase in lagoon water levels, encroaching club rush, and reduced observer activity probably contributing to under recording.

White-rumped Sandpiper (Calidris fuscicollis)

North American Vagrant

A single sighting by one lucky observer on 14th October, 1990.

Pectoral Sandpiper (Calidris melanotos)

North American Vagrant

The commonest of the North American waders to end up on UK or Irish shores, Lough Beg has four sightings recorded; 19th September, 1976, 30th August, 1983, 21st / 22nd September, 1996 and 9th September, 2008. The last three birds were aged as juveniles, and the 1983 bird was photographed at close range.

Long-billed Dowitcher (Limnodromus scolopaceus)

North American Vagrant

There are three autumn sightings of juveniles; on 30th September to 1st October, 2006, 5th October, 2008 and 7th to 21st October, 2012.

Common Snipe (Gallinago gallinago)

Common Resident and Winter visitor

Seen in all months, this diminutive and secretive wader is a regular sighting, feeding along the shoreline. Certainly under recorded, and is usually present singly, or in small groups, but here have been a number of higher counts, probably cold weather movements, most notably 92 on 26th January, 1986. Drumming birds recorded over the eastern end of the reserve hinted at breeding within the area. Snipe have been trapped and ringed. A number of sightings of Sparrowhawk taking Snipe in winter.

Jack Snipe (Lymnocryptes minimus)

Rare Winter visitor

This very secretive cousin of the Common Snipe is certainly under recorded in what should be perfect habitat for this skulking wader. Only six observations reported, all but one of singletons, with three birds disturbed by the local ringer on 1st December, 2017 as he retrieved his poles from earlier ringing activities.

Common Sandpiper (Actitis hypoleucos)

Common Spring and Autumn passage migrant

Recorded regularly in all months between April and October, with a single bird on 24th November, 1986 a clear outlier, this bird can be seen anywhere; along the fringes of the lagoon, feeding along the outlet creek, roosting on the causeway rocks, or on the shingle beach below Currabinny Wood. Spring records have all been of individual transients, but larger (family?) groups are more frequent in Autumn, with counts of 6 – 7 in July quite regular. Peak count reported was of 16 birds on 29th July, 2018. Not suspected of breeding locally, but regular sightings of larger flocks (up to 13 birds) in June in Carrigaline in most years may indicate breeding up along the Owenabue River, which meets the sea at nearby Crosshaven.

Green Sandpiper (Tringa ochropus)

Scarce Autumn passage migrant

Records of this wader are all of 1 – 2 birds, mainly in August and September. Recorded in most years, and certainly under recorded, birds are very short stayers and tend to be particularly flighty, so sightings are chance affairs!

Lesser Yellowlegs (Tringa flavipes)

North American Vagrant

Two birds have been recorded, one on 7th – 21st August, 1989, and a second, first seen and photographed within the lagoon in mid-September, 2006, after which it commuted between the reserve and Carrigaline, returning to the seaward side of the causeway at high tides. Last seen out on the estuary on 1st October, 2006.

Spotted Redshank (Tringa erythropus)

Scarce autumn passage migrant and winter visitor

Most early records of this elegant wader were passage migrants moving through between mid-July and mid-October, as individuals or small groups. However, in 1989 and 1990 a new trend seemed to be established of more substantial flocks of 5 – 6 birds overwintering, normally seen feeding along the outlet creek on the receding tide, but this change in status was not maintained. The species is once again reduced to occasional, but almost annual sightings of passage or wintering individuals. There are a number of records of mid-summer migrants still exhibiting the spectacular summer plumage.

Common Greenshank (Tringa nebularia)

Common passage migrant and winter visitor

Bird regularly seen all around reserve area. Normally solitary birds feeding on shoreline, but larger migrating flocks have been recorded in autumn, sometimes exceeding 30 birds, as on 25th August, 2018, and exhibiting summer plumage, as with a flock of 12 seen and photographed on 25th June, 1982.

Common Redshank (Tringa totanus)

Common passage migrant and winter visitor

Possibly the commonest wader in Lough Beg, Redshank are recorded in all months, with lowest numbers in May, but otherwise very common. Another of the main components of the old wader roosts in the lagoon, often so prevalent that observers only estimated flock sizes. Highest count was 513 on 22nd September, 1991, but many counts and estimates >250 birds. A number of interesting recoveries and controls demonstrate similar evidence of wader site fidelity as the Curlew and Black-tailed Godwit that often roost with it at Lough Beg.

Wood Sandpiper (Tringa glareola)

Rare Autumn passage migrant

Only recorded in August and September, this species is less wary and longer staying than its close relative, the Green Sandpiper. Probably no more than 9 sightings, and only once, on 2nd August, 1977 (when three birds were seen) was the observation of more than a single specimen.

Wilson's Phalarope (Steganopus tricolor)

North American Vagrant

Lough Beg holds a proportionately high percentage of national records of this charming wader with four birds recorded. The first was on 4th September, 1976, the second exactly 9 years later, which stayed for 8 days – this bird was ringed on 8th September 1985 (possibly only UK & Irl. ringing?), a third on 24th – 29th August, 1987 was photographed, and the last record was on 22nd August, 1989. Two of the four were identified as juveniles. Alas, no records since then – but the planned remediation might just encourage another visitation!

Grey Phalarope (Phalaropus fulicarius)

Vagrant

Single observation of storm blown individual on 11th October, 1981 is the only record of this pelagic wanderer.

Auks (Alcidae)

Black Guillemot (Cepphus grylle)

Scarce winter visitor

Although it breeds locally on cliff faces along the Cork coast, records of this auk are limited to birds feeding off Currabinny Wood. Normally recorded singly, there is one record of 6 birds on 9th March, 1980. Most common of the auk species recorded in the report area.

Razorbill (Alca torda)

Vagrant

Only two January records of this bird in the report area, in 1985 and 1993. Probably under recorded, as common outside of Cork Harbour.

Common Guillemot (Uria aalge)

Vagrant

Similar commentary to that of the Razorbill, only one record, that on 3rd January, 1994.

Gulls and Terns (Laridae)

Black-legged Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla)

Rare winter visitor

Another species probably under recorded, but sightings limited to occasional storm blown individuals. Notable record of a flock of ~200 on the mudflats on 7th December, 1982.

Sabine's Gull (Xema sabini)

Vagrant

Sightings of this Arctic spectacular, first seen on the mudflats on 22nd July, 2003, then in October of 2007, 2010 and 2011 were probably of an adult winter plumaged individual that took to overwintering in Cobh in those years.

Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus)

Common resident

Seen in all months and in all years, but observations can vary from large winter flocks loafing on the mudflats to frantic feeding by smaller groups hawking hatching flies and flying ants in spring and summer. Ubiquitous, and therefore under recorded. Peak estimated counts of >800 on 7th December, 1982 and 10th June, 1987.

Little Gull (Hydrocoloeus minutus)

Rare Spring and Autumn passage migrant

This dainty gull has been seen on seven occasions, with an unusual winter sighting on 28th December, 1978, and more usual spring (1984 & 1987) and autumn (1983 & 1998) records, all of single birds. More intriguing was a pair, first seen on 5th (lingering to 20th), with one bird still present to 22nd July, 2003. Finally, a 1st Summer was recorded on 20th July, 2018.

Laughing Gull (Leucophaeus atricilla)

Vagrant

Just one record of this North American larid, on 10th July, 2004.

Mediterranean Gull (Ichthyaetus melanocephalus)

Scarce autumn passage migrant

With no records prior to 1992, Lough Beg has shared in the increased sightings of this gull all along the south coast of Ireland. Species has colonised Ireland in the past few years, and sightings followed the classic pattern of pioneering individuals or pairs recorded annually to 2008, when 12 were recorded on 25th September, and a further 15 (specifically 8 adults, four 2nd Winters and three 1st Winters) almost a year later on 11th September, 2009.

Number have increased apace since then, with an amazing 60 birds seen on 22nd August, 2011, 28 adult Summers seen on 30th June, 2016 and 44 on 2nd August, 2017, all trumped by a dusk roost of 95 birds on the mudflats on 3rd August, 2017. Seven birds on the Shingle Beach on 3rd August, 2018 included a ringed bird, too far away to read.

Common Gull (Larus canus)

Common

Regular sighting in the reserve area but, contrary to its name, not the commonest gull. Recorded every year and in all months, this gull is most often seen in groups<25 birds, but there were three notable counts of >300 individuals, with ~400 on 7th December, 1982, a highest count of ~500 on 1st January, 1999 and ~300 on 5th February, 2006.

Recent monitoring has detected a large nocturnal roost of 100s-1000s of Common Gulls in the open water between Spike Island and Crosshaven and pre-roost gatherings of 100s of these often occur in Lough Beg shortly before sunset.

Ring-billed Gull (Larus delawarensis)

North American Vagrant

This North American gull has been recorded on four occasions; two 1st Summers on 12th April, 1997, a 1st Summer on 7th August, 2003, and singles on 17th July, 2004 and 13th April, 2008. Given the frequent sightings of this species at many of our fishing ports over the past 25 years, it’s likely this gull has been overlooked!

Lesser Black-backed Gull (Larus fuscus)

Common

Recorded in all years and all months, but rarely in substantial numbers. A noticeable exception would be the ~500 birds seen on 1st January, 1999 (also the date of the peak count of Common Gull).

European Herring Gull (Larus argentatus)

Common resident

Normally seen in small numbers loafing on the mudflats. Yet again, peak count was on 1st January, 1999, with an estimated ~500 birds.

Iceland Gull (Larus glaucoides glaucoides)

Winter Vagrant

Only two sightings of this Arctic gull, a 1st Winter on 28th March, 1983 and a 2nd calendar year bird on 28th April, 2018.

Glaucous Gull (Larus hyperboreus)

Winter Vagrant

Within a week of the only sighting of the closely related Iceland Gull, the first sighting of this species was again of a 1st Winter on 9th April, 1983. It took 10 years for the next one to arrive, on 22nd April, 1993, and 15 years later a 3rd Winter or Adult was noted on 25th September, 2008.

Great Black-backed Gull (Larus marinus)

Common resident

Another common larid that is certainly under recorded at Lough Beg. Normally seen in small numbers on the mudflats, or roosting on the offshore island. One notable count of 96 mainly immature birds on 4th May, 1980.

Little Tern (Sternula albifrons)

Vagrant

This tiny tern nests along our coasts on sandy beaches, but sightings anywhere in Cork Harbour are exceptional. Three individuals noted, on 16th April, 1987, 26th August, 2000 and 23rd April, 2018.

Whiskered Tern (Chlidonias hybrida)

Spring vagrant

Only a single record of this Marsh Tern, a Summer adult seen and photographed during a two day sojourn on 29th & 30th April, 2007.

White-winged Black Tern (Chlidonias leucopterus)

Vagrant

Possibly the least expected observation ever at Lough Beg was of a Winter adult of this marsh tern, well out of its range, and out of season, seen and photographed between 16th November and 8th December, 2002, when the lagoon froze over!

Black Tern [sp] (Chlidonias niger)

Vagrant

Another Marsh Tern, this one with two sightings, the first on 8th August, 1983, and a juvenile on 1st September, 2011.

Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii)

Rare Summer Visitor

Although breeding in Wexford and along the East Coast, sightings of this tern in Co. Cork are notable. Flock of five birds have been recorded twice, the first comprising three adults and two juveniles on 3rd July, 2003, and the second on 16th July, 2012 were exceptional! However, a recent Tern Monitoring program in Cork Harbour added 1 adult on 12th August, 2017, 1 juvenile on 16th August and 2 juveniles on 1st September, 2018 roosting in the large mixed tern flocks, so probably underrecorded.

Common Tern (Sterna hirundo)

Common Summer visitor

Frequently seen feeding on the seaward side of the causeway and off the shingle beach between late April and early October. Has bred sporadically on the offshore island since 2003, with up to 15 active nests noted in 2017, but lost to predation (possibly Otter). Breeding attempts are likely to be satellite sites to the main breeding colony now established on the mooring dolphins at nearby Ringaskiddy High count of 200 on 15th August, 2016, 45 on 3rd August, 2017 and 380 on 20th August, 2018.

Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea)

Rare Summer visitor

Because it is difficult to distinguish from the Common Tern, there probably have been more frequent occurrences than reported to date. A solitary bird noted on 14th July, 2004 remained the only record until survey work of the tern flocks during 2017 / 2018 recorded one on 30th April – 1st May, 2017, one on 20th and two on 24th April, two on 4th May, one on 16th August and at least 20 on 20th August, 2018 (in a large flock of Commic Terns roosting at dusk).

European Sandwich Tern (Thalasseus sandvicensis sandvicensis)

Common Spring and Autumn passage migrant

Never proven to breed in Co. Cork, but is regularly reported at Lough Beg, any time between an earliest date of 19th March in 2005 (two birds) to a latest of 13th October, 2015. Large flocks of adults and juveniles common from mid-July to mid-September, with a previous peak of 243 birds on 17th August, 1987.

However, the survey work mentioned above, carried out between Autumn 2016 and Autumn 2018, has increased our understanding of what this autumn build-up looks like. Annual peak autumn counts of the evening roosts were 710 on 18th August, 2016, 472 on 10th August, 2017 and at least 1,000 on 2nd September, 2018. Roosts typically build-up very late with large numbers arriving from around 15 minutes before to 15 minutes after sunset and, on the peak roost dates, terns flooding in through the mouth of Lough Beg as darkness falls.

Daytime roosts are smaller, with annual peaks of 438 on 31st August, 2016, 273 on 10th August, 2017 and 340 on 16th August, 2018; the highest numbers generally occuring on afternoon low tides. The terns roost on the intertidal at low tide, generally close to, but not on, the tideline, so the flocks follow the tideline. At high tide they roost on the rocky shore around the peninsula at the mouth of Lough Beg. However, on evening high tides, the terns move to the inner part of Lough Beg, where they roost on the island and the shoreline to the north. Occasionally, the terns may abandon Lough Beg, if they are disturbed close to dusk. The overall percentage of juveniles recorded in sample counts across the three autumns was 24%, which is similar to the percentage of juveniles in Sandwich Terns caught during ringing expeditions to Lough Beg (20%).

In spring, the nocturnal tern roosts are on the navigation buoys in the mouth of the Owenboy and between Fort Camden and Roches Point and no terns roost overnight in Lough Beg. However, small numbers of terns may roost in Lough Beg during the day with peak counts of 14 on 28th April, 2017 and 81 on 23rd April, 2018.

Osprey (Pandionidae)

Osprey (Pandion haliaetus)

Vagrant

This spectacular raptor has been seen twice at Lough Beg. One bird was spotted and photographed on 31st August, 1997, and the same bird was possibly that seen at Ballycotton later that evening. The second bird was also a one-day event, on 27th September, 1999.

Hawks, Eagles and Kites (Accipitridae)

Western Marsh Harrier (Circus aeruginosus)

Rare Spring passage migrant

There have been six occasions when this raptor has graced the area, with the first, a female, on 11th June, 1982. Since then, individuals have been seen on 12th June and 11th September, 2005, 29th May, 2008 and 11th May, 2012 – this bird was tagged on both left and right wings, but no alpha-numerics were discernible. However, the most intriguing was a pair seen on 5th June 2007, unfortunately one of which was seen dead on the Carrigaline road the following morning. Reed bed area is probably too small to support a breeding pair of this species, which has been suspected of breeding elsewhere in the South of Ireland in recent years.

Hen Harrier (Circus cyaneus cyaneus)

Vagrant

Only one sighting of this persecuted and declining harrier has been reported, that of a juvenile flying over on 28th October, 2006.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk (Accipiter nisus)

Common resident

Seen in most years and in all months, most sightings have been of hunting females. Known to breed in Currabinny Wood. On a number of occasions seen preying on Common Snipe along the lagoon shoreline.

Northern Goshawk (Accipiter gentilis)

Vagrant

Seen twice in 2003, on 22nd July and 7th August. (Slight suspicion could have originated from holidaying falconers – but there is a record of a displaying pair just west of nearby Carrigaline in Spring, 2005).

Red Kite (Milvus milvus)

Vagrant

This bird’s Irish population is showing an encouraging increase but, so far, sightings in the reserve area limited to a single sighting of an untagged bird seen and photographed overflying the harbour on 6th January, 2010

Eurasian Buzzard (Buteo buteo)

Common resident

The first sighting at Lough Beg on 28th May, 1985 was then only the 6th county record. How times have changed, as this bird’s colonisation of most corners of Ireland in the past 15 years has been a real success story. Now seen every year and in each month. Probably breeds locally

Barn Owls (Tytonidae)

Barn Owl (Tyto alba)

Vagrant

Although there is only one sighting recorded in the area, on 12th September, 1997, there is anecdotal evidence of more frequent occurrences. Unfortunately these have comprised of comments on road casualties or victims of indiscriminate shooting, without the dates being recorded.

Owls (Strigidae)

Long-eared Owl [sp] (Asio otus)

Rare resident

This difficult to observe nocturnal owl has been seen 10 times at Lough Beg, all but one sighting of individual birds. Two were seen on 20th July, 1985. Probably breeds in Currabinny Wood. An interesting observation was of one hunting bats along the causeway at dusk on 29th September, 2014.

Short-eared Owl [sp] (Asio flammeus)

Vagrant

Only one sighting of the diurnal owl, that on 21st April, 2015 hunting over the Donkey Field. Based on the suitability of the habitat, it is surmised that other fleeting visits by this species have been missed.

Kingfishers (Alcedinidae)

Common Kingfisher (Alcedo atthis)

Scarce autumn and winter visitor

This little jewel is most likely to be seen in autumn, as there is a local migration noted of birds to the coast. Single birds fishing or darting across the lagoon are regular at this time. Sightings in November, December and January may indicate a proportion of this migrating group remains in the area throughout the winter.

Caracaras, Falcons (Falconidae)

Common Kestrel (Falco tinnunculus)

Common Resident

This common hovering falcon vies with the Sparrowhawk as the most frequently recorded raptor in the area. Recorded every year and in all months, and probably breeds locally, this bird is more likely to be encountered in Spring through to Autumn, with records slightly less frequent in Winter.

Merlin (Falco columbarius)

Rare Autumn passage migrant, and Winter visitor

Most of the 10 records of this diminutive falcon have been between August and November, where specifically identified all have been adult or immature Females, with single birds seen once in January, February and March. All sightings have been chance encounters, so almost certainly under recorded.

Peregrine Falcon (Falco peregrinus)

Scarce resident

Singles recorded in most months, with a slight bias towards juvenile birds, possibly from broods successfully raised on the Cork coastline cliffs, seen in Autumn stooping (almost always unsuccessfully!) onto the wader flocks feeding on the tideline. Like Merlin, observations are random, so occurrences probably underrecorded

Crows and Jays (Corvidae)

Eurasian Jay (Garrulus glandarius)

Scarce, but increasing, local resident

Probably breeds in Currabinny Woods, the area shares in the national population increase of this beautiful member of the Crow family. First sightings in the actual reserve were in 2018, when individuals were frequently seen and heard along the Sli.

Common Magpie (Pica pica)

Common resident

The incessant cackle of the Magpie is a regular accompaniment on any visit to the reserve. Nests in the reserve, and probably does damage to the breeding efforts of many of the local passerines. Normally seen in pairs, or small groups, a flock of 10 on 17th September, 1994 was exceptional.

Red-billed Chough (Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax)

Vagrant

Although Chough breed on the sea cliffs along the South Cork coast, the habitat in the reserve area is not conducive to this species occurring often. In fact, there is only one record, that of 3 birds, on 30th May, 1996.

Eurasian Jackdaw (Corvus monedula)

Common resident

Common crow, mainly seen overflying the reserve, or feeding in the local fields. May nest in the farm buildings south of the 2nd Entrance. Rarely recorded in the logbook, so probably best described as an ignored species!

Rook (Corvus frugilegus)

Common resident

Status similar to Jackdaw, but there is a very large night time roost of this species in the nearby Coolmore Estate, with the large numbers of birds returning at dusk providing an interesting local avian spectacle. There is an exceptional estimate of c.400 birds in a ploughed field adjacent to the reserve on 10th September, 2007, and “hundreds” seen on 4th February, 2010.

Hooded Crow (Corvus cornix)

Common Resident

This large crow does nest, individually, on trees within the reserve. Normally seen in pairs and small groups, it is often observed garnering cockles and mussels from the mudflats, which they then drop from height on any hard surface to smash open the shells – the remnants of which can be seen along the causeway, the Sli, and the factory carparks. Regarded by the local gun club as a pest species! Flock of 68 seen along the Shingle Beach on 21st November, 1992, and an exceptional 110 seen in the Wood on 24th May of the same year. Counts since then would be much lower.

Common Raven (Corvus corax)

Common Resident

The harsh croak of an overflying bird is often the first hint of this magnificent bird’s presence. Almost certainly breeds in the Wood, normally seen singly, or in pairs – but Autumn sightings of larger family groups not unusual.

Tits and Chickadees (Paridae)

Great Tit (Parus major)

Common Resident

Certainly under recorded, this charmer is common along any of the walks in the reserve area. Breeds in the reserve, has used the recently installed nest boxes. Often encountered in Winter in mixed flocks of foraging tits and finches.

Blue Tit (Parus caeruleus)

Common Resident

Similar status to Great Tit, possibly a commoner bird, but certainly under recorded.

Coal Tit (Parus ater)

Common Resident

Less likely to be encountered in the reserve area than either Great or Blue Tit, but much more frequently seen – or, more likely, heard – in the Wood Can be found as singles or pairs in the aforementioned mixed species foraging flocks.

Swallows and Martins (Hirundinidae)

Sand Martin (Riparia riparia)

Common, but possibly locally declining, Summer Visitor

Nearly always the first of the hirundines to arrive to the reserve, with an earliest date of 10th March 2013, and recorded in small numbers most years by the end of March. Commonly seen feeding over lagoon and reedbeds, but local breeding site(s) yet to be located. Large numbers seen in Autumn, especially in the large mixed hirundine roosts in the phragmites beds opposite the hide. Larger flocks seen in the 1990’s.

European Swallow (Hirundo rustica rustica)

Common Summer Visitor

The first birds of Spring has usually arrived by late March, and this hirundine is likely to be the latest recorded in most years, but not commonly seen later than mid-October – latest “normal” record possibly that of a single bird on 19th November, 1986. However, there are exceptions, with single waifs recorded on 15th January, 1981, 19th January, 1986 and New Year’s Day, 1987.

Huge numbers observed in the phragmites beds in pre-migration flocks through September in most years. Has bred in buildings in factory!

House Martin (Delichon urbicum)

Common Summer Visitor

Spring records normally are later than either Swallow or Sand Martin, but there are early sightings on 24th March, 1981 and 26th March, 2011. Departing birds have usually left by mid-September, so 5 birds seen on 2nd October, 2011 are notable for the area. Although seen annually, counts are always much lower than the previous two species.

Long-tailed Tits (Aegithalidae)

Long-tailed Tit (Aegithalos caudatus)

Common Resident

Seen in all months, breeds on the reserve. Joins winter foraging flocks along the Sli and along causeway, usually in groups less than 10 – but notable counts of 28 on 19th September, 1986 and 25 on 5th January, 1994.

Larks (Alaudidae)

Eurasian Skylark (Alauda arvensis)

Scarce Resident (?) and Winter Visitor

A species whose population trends may very well be one of the best local indices of the decline of bird numbers in the past 40 years. Formerly a fairly common breeder in the area, records in Spring now reduced to single singing males on sporadic dates. Comments in the logbook prior to 2005 describe the bird as Common in Winter – again, with the exception of overflying arriving migrants in September / October, species now seldom seen, or heard.

Old World Warblers (Sylviidae)

Grasshopper Warbler (Locustella naevia)

Spring passage migrant

Although the habitat of the reserve, especially in the Donkey Field, would seem to suit this warbler, records are sparse and usually only of individuals passing through. A singing male seen, photographed and heard between 20th and 26th April, 2011 hinted at possible breeding near the Concrete Bridge, and a juvenile bird was trapped, photographed and ringed on 4th July, 2018.

Sedge Warbler (Acrocephalus schoenobaenus)

Common Summer visitor

This warbler nests in the reserve, estimates between 4 and 7 pairs. A late arrival, normally first heard in the last week of April. Heard through the following three months, then falling silent through August before departing during September. There is an earliest date of 15th April, 2014, and a latest date of 11th September, 2013. Has been trapped and ringed on the reserve, with a number of interesting retraps at the site and controls away from Lough Beg confirming migration routes (see Ringing Summary Report).

Eurasian Reed Warbler (Acrocephalus scirpaceus)

Rare Summer visitor

This skulking warbler, whose Irish breeding population has been increasing over the past few years, has yet to be seen in the wild at the reserve. Instead, the first record was of a bird trapped and ringed on 25th August 2012 – without the ringer realising this was the 1st reserve record! Males were recorded singing on 6th June and 4th July, 2018, so breeding is likely, and another juvenile trapped and ringed on 29th August.

Willow Warbler (Phylloscopus trochilus)

Common Summer Visitor

This beautiful chanteur of the hedgerows is a common breeder in the reserve. Normally well established by early April, the song is heard through April – June, but birds generally then fall silent (although there is an unusual record of a singing bird between 29th August and 6th September, 1985), and are seldom seen or heard after mid-July. Earliest arrival date is 27th March, 2005.

Common Chiffchaff (Phylloscopus collybita)

Common Summer visitor and scarce Winter visitor

Recorded in all months, this close relative of the Willow Warbler is not blessed with a fine voice, but the onomatopoeic call is heard from mid-March through to late September, or later. As some birds overwinter, an earliest spring migrant arrival date is a guess, but likely to be mid-March, with the latest departure date of a migrating bird estimated at mid-September. Overwintering birds are normally singletons, but a roving flock of 7 birds feeding in the rushes at the causeway bend on 15th December, 2002 is notable.

Blackcap (Sylvia atricapilla)

Common Summer visitor and scarce Winter visitor

Another lovely songster, which has nationally gone from a local rarity to a widespread breeder in the past 30 years, with the report area mirroring this trend. Commonly seen and heard along hedgerows in Spring, with an earliest date of 30th March, 2008, birds then falling silent from mid-July. There is a late date of 22nd October, 2016.

However, studies suggest our summer breeding population winters in Africa, and migrates to Europe each Spring. Conversely, our wintering birds are believed to emanate from a continental European population that migrates west, rather than south, in the winter, with the reserve having a number of sightings between November and February of this population.

Common Whitethroat (Sylvia communis)

Scarce Summer visitor

This species suffered a catastrophic regional population crash between late 1960’s and the late 1980’s, before starting a slow but steady recovery. Matching this, the first record at the reserve was of a pair on 21st August, 1994, with regular records since then. Has bred on the reserve, males now regularly heard and seen between May and July, particularly in the Donkey Field.

Goldcrests/Kinglets (Reguliidae)

Goldcrest (Regulus regulus)

Common Resident

Smallest bird in Europe, regularly heard and seen in trees and hedgerows within reserve, common resident in the Wood. Proven breeder in reserve. Certainly under recorded, normally in pairs or small groups, so a sighting of 30 birds on 18th October, 2005 is remarkable!

Wrens (Troglodytidae)

British Wren (Troglodytes troglodytes indigenus)

Common Resident

Status similar to Goldcrest, often heard rather than seen. Regular breeder in the reserve.

Treecreepers (Certhiidae)

Eurasian Treecreeper (Certhia familiaris)

Scarce Resident

Not recorded on the reserve, but a scarce resident in the Wood.

Starlings (Sturnidae)

European Starling (Sturnus vulgaris)

Common Resident

Under recorded. Seen in every month of every year. Normally seen overflying the reserve, but also seen foraging through the fronds of seaweed on the shingle beach, or gorging on the Elderberries on the nearby trees in Autumn.

Thrushes (Turdidae)

Eurasian Blackbird (Turdus merula)

Common Resident

Seen throughout the year, with no major changes in abundance detectable. Breeds on the reserve.

Fieldfare (Turdus pilaris)

Rare Winter visitor

Given the huge numbers of this, and the following species that winter in Ireland, Fieldfare seem to be remarkably uncommon in this corner of Co. Cork. Records limited to observations in 1980, 1981, 1997 and 2002, with none even recorded in the harsh weather of February – March, 2018.

Redwing (Turdus iliacus)

Scarce Winter visitor

More regular than Fieldfare, but still comparatively unusual sighting in the reserve. Seen in the same years as Fieldfare, with additional records in 1982, 1996, 1999, 2003 and 2013. Was seen in big numbers in early-March, 2018 after major snowstorm.

Song Thrush (Turdus philomelos)

Common Resident

This songster is a regular feature along the walks, with the loud and insistent territorial song being noted as early as late November in recent years. From then on, bird is conspicuous singing from elevated song posts, until breeding is completed – and then the bird seems to disappear of the face of the earth from late July until the time comes around again to lay claim to breeding territory, and a nice mate! Breeds in the reserve.

Mistle Thrush (Turdus viscivorus)

Common Resident

One of the earliest breeders, the plaintive and poor imitation of the Song Thrush phrases can be heard from early March. More likely, though is the alarm or scolding rattle typical of birds defending a nesting location. Underrecorded, breeds on the reserve.

Chats and Old World Flycatchers (Muscicapidae)

European Robin (Erithacus rubecula)

Common Resident

Any visit to the reserve will yield the charming Robin, a pugnacious bird, especially with its own kind, always alone, unless paired up during the breeding season. Can be heard in song in nearly every month, and often at night especially near light sources. Breeds widely on the reserve.

Black Redstart (Phoenicurus ochruros)

Scarce Autumn passage migrant

All but one record of this late Autumn migrant were from November – and the exception only one day earlier, on 31st October, 1999! The factory roof played host to a group of three seen and photographed between 1st and 10th November, 1982, part of a large local influx. Other sightings of single birds were on 14th November, 1980, 13th November, 1989 and 28th November, 1995.

Common Stonechat (Saxicola torquatus rubicola/hibernans)

Scarce Resident

Once a common bird all around the western shores of Cork Harbour, the Stonechat is one of three species whose population seems to have been decimated during the recent hard winters, especially that of 2010 / 2011. During the breeding season, 6 – 8 pairs would occupy every suitable stand of gorse or bramble, this has now been reduced to (at best) a single pair – normally close to the Concrete Bridge. Similarly, winter walks now often fail to record even a single specimen.

Northern Wheatear (Oenanthe oenanthe)

Common Spring and Scarce Autumn passage migrant

Often the first Spring migrant recorded in the report area, earliest sighting was 22nd March, 1981, with a “late” bird seen feeding along the Shingle Beach on 19th May, 2018. Returning autumnal birds have been seen as early as 6th July, 1998 and the latest record being 16th October, 1983. Only seen as singles or pairs of birds, and rarely staying for more than a few hours.

Old World Flycatchers (Muscicapidae)

Spotted Flycatcher (Muscicapa striata)

Rare Summer Visitor

The only local habitat suitable for this unobtrusive character would be glades in the Wood, or the surrounding gardens, areas difficult to observe! So, it is no surprise that the only record is of a single bird on 11th September, 1983. Almost certainly underrecorded, but less likely to be found into the future, as its population is in steep decline

Sparrows, Snowfinches and Allies (Passeridae)

House Sparrow (Passer domesticus)

Common Resident

Surprisingly, it is unusual to encounter this bird on a casual walk around the reserve! Habitat does not seem to suit this gregarious species, with occurrences most likely on the main road approaching the causeway entrance, in the bushes to the south end of the Shingle Beach, or around the dwellings on the road to the Wood.

Accentors (Prunellidae)

Dunnock (Prunella modularis)

Common Resident

As with Robin, and Wren, this bird should be seen or heard on every visit to the reserve. Seen in all months and all years, its silvery song is on of the earliest heralds of spring. Breeds annually in the reserve, often just in front of the hide.

Pipits and Wagtails (Motacillidae)

British Yellow Wagtail (Motacilla flava flavissima)

Rare Spring and Autumn passage migrant

Although this British race of the Yellow Wagtail is common across the Irish Sea, this summer visitor is rare in Ireland. The previous reserve habitat of grazed meadow and clear shoreline probably proved more attractive to birds passing through, as none have been recorded since 1998. The five records are split between Autumn sightings on 2nd October, 1976 and 6th September 1981; and Spring sightings on 8th May, 1988, 6th May, 1996 and 10th May 1998.

Blue-headed Wagtail (Motacilla flava flava)

Rare Spring passage migrant

There are two records of this rarer, mainland European nominate race of the Yellow Wagtail, one on 30th April, 1996 and the other seen and photographed on 10th May, 1998 – accompanying the Yellow Wagtail (above).

Grey Wagtail (Motacilla cinerea)

Common Resident

This bird of riverbanks and shoreline is often encountered along the causeway, or on the shoreline close to the sluice. Seen in most months of every year, but not yet proven to breed on the reserve.

Pied Wagtail (Motacilla alba yarrellii)

Common Resident

Seen on most visits, and normally along the causeway or in the factory car parks. Now seen singly, or in pairs, the large night time roost observed on the roof of one of the factory processing plants in the 1980’s seems to have disappeared. There is a peak count of 74 birds counted on 21st August, 1989. Surprisingly, not proven to breed on the reserve.

White Wagtail (Motacilla alba alba)

Rare Autumn passage migrant

There are a number of sightings of this, the European nominate race of this wagtail from the reserve. A flock of seven was seen between 19th and 29th September, 1976, singles on 29th - 30th August, 2007, and 7th September, 2008 – this bird joined by a second on 9th. Probably due to difficulties in separating female and immature White and Pied Wagtails, where specifically noted, all birds seen were adult males. Also, this probably means the race is underrecorded and autumn wagtails are deserving of closer examination.

Meadow Pipit (Anthus pratensis)

Common Resident

A number of pairs usually occupied breeding territories in the Donkey field and the main reserve area, but this is another passerine that seems to have suffered after recent harsh winters. Spring observations have only been of I – 2 pairs in recent years, and wintering counts also much reduced. Has been proven to breed on the reserve.

Rock Pipit (Anthus petrosus)

Rare Resident

Although common along the rocky portions of the Cork coast, there is only one small area to the north of the shingle beach likely to attract this aptly named bird. Consequently, there is only one record, that of a single bird, on 19th August, 2008. Species probably underrecorded.

Finches and Hawaiian Honeycreepers (Fringillidae)

Chaffinch (Fringilla coelebs)

Common Resident

Commonest finch on the reserve, seen in all months and every year. Ignored and unrecorded by most visitors, wintering flocks of ~20 are common along the Sli. Has been proven to breed on the reserve, once right in front of the hide.

European Greenfinch (Carduelis chloris)

Common Resident

Previously a common year round resident of the reserve, sightings now reduced to lone birds, pairs, or single figure flocks in winter. Flocks of more than 30 birds noted on at least 8 occasions between 1996 and 2007, but decline seems to have then set in . Literature suggests disease such as Trichomoniasis spread through unclean bird feeders in gardens to be partially responsible. Has not been proven to breed on the reserve, but breeds later in the Summer in colonies, and may have been overlooked.

Eurasian Siskin (Carduelis spinus)

Common Winter Visitor

Records are scarce prior to the mid-1990’s, but since then roving winter flocks have become regular. The construction of the Sli has allowed access to previously inaccessible areas, and flocks of up to 40 birds are no longer unusual. There is one outstanding count of ~250 birds in Currabinny Wood on the unusual date of 17th September, 1997.

European Goldfinch (Carduelis carduelis)

Common Resident

This charming finch is one of the few species whose numbers seem to be increasing. Small flocks seen in most months, and has bred on the reserve. Birds have been seen collecting nesting materials from the Mace adjacent to the pond at the Concrete Bridge. Larger winter flocks can occur, with a peak 55 birds counted feeding along the causeway on 14th November, 2004.

Lesser Redpoll (Carduelis flammea cabaret)

Scarce Resident

Along with the Siskin, records of this tiny finch are also increasing. Often found in mixed flocks with Siskin, tits and the larger finches. Recorded between October and April, but may breed in Currabinny. Peak count of ~60 birds feeding along causeway alders on 7th October, 2008.

Common Linnet (Carduelis cannabina)

Common Resident

Yet another declining finch species, with double digit flocks of the 1980’s and 1990’s now replaced by much more modest groupings. Peak count of ~75 birds on 19th October, 1988. Has bred in the reserve.

Red Crossbill (Loxia curvirostra)

Vagrant

There have been three separate recordings of this irregular and irruptive species in Currabinny Wood. The first is a series of sightings between 16th June and 15th October, 1988 (with a peak of 12 birds on 20th June), 18 birds on 1st July, 1993 and a large flock present between 17th and 28th June, 1997, with 45 birds counted on the latter date.

Eurasian Bullfinch (Pyrrhula pyrrhula)

Common Resident

Seen throughout the year, this bird is often seen in pairs along the various walkways in the reserve and in the Wood. Probably does, but not proven to breed on the reserve. Peak count of 10 on Christmas Day, 1996.

Buntings and New World Sparrows (Emberizidae)

Yellowhammer (Emberiza citrinella)

Vagrant

Although there are healthy populations 4km NW, 8km SW and 8km S of the reserve, the absence of local cereal growing had limited the sightings of this bunting to a single occurrence of 15 birds on 13th October, 1985.

Reed Bunting (Emberiza schoeniclus)

Common Resident

This bird occupies up to 10 breeding territories in the reserve every spring, and is commonly seen between April and September. A peak of 20 birds, at least 12 of which were singing males were counted during a vain attempt to relocate the reserve’s 1st Purple Heron on 5th June, 1999. However, the birds seem to disperse widely in winter, and only single birds or small groups are seen, or heard.