

# Ireland

17-24 August 2013

---

Jacob Rudhe, Raúl Vicente, Rasmus Elleby, Hans Elleby & Jon Jörpeland



## 1. Trip

---

Ireland is one of the best places in Europe to watch high numbers of several seabird species. With its beautiful landscape, friendly people and of course plenty of seabird species we can really recommend all birdwatchers who enjoy long days of seabird-watching to visit Ireland. We were five people who decided to travel to Ireland during one the best period for watching seabirds. Although we did not have the really high numbers of Manx Shearwaters, which are possible during this period, we had a good mixture of species including all regular seen Shearwaters, many species of gulls and terns and high numbers of Skuas. Besides seabird-watching, some time was spent for watching waders. However, this summer/autumn turned out to be less good than normal with lower numbers of waders than expected for the region.

### Background

Watching seabirds on Ireland is most rewarding from July to September. Late summer months offers good opportunities for watching high numbers of the species breeding on the British Islands and Ireland, including; Manx shearwater, Atlantic Puffin, Northern Gannet and Northern Fulmar. Atlantic Puffin is one of the first species to migrate out to sea and from mid-August the species is just seen in low numbers. August offers a greater variety of species including most Shearwaters, Skuas, and Storm-petrels. Wilson's Petrel is rare but yearly and the same goes for Fea's Petrel. The autumn months continues with higher numbers of Skuas,

Leach's Storm-petrel and Sooty Shearwaters. The other species of Shearwater has by then continued towards southern latitudes.

Watching seabirds can be quite weather dependent and one is often in need of bad weather with low pressures and strong onshore winds for high numbers. High pressures associated with less wind and clear sky will often result in low numbers of most seabirds. For the southwestern and western parts of Ireland, winds from the west and northwest sector are to recommend resulting in good observations from land. During our stay most of the days were fairly windy with forces between 10-13 m/s mainly from the west and some from the northwest sector. Two days differed from the rest; on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August winds were blowing from the south-southwestern sector. The other day was the 22<sup>th</sup> of August when a high pressure passed with very sunny weather and moderate winds which led to poor movements of the birds.

### Accommodation

We stayed at an apartment in Kilkee, a small summer town approximately thirty kilometers from Bridges of Ross. We found it very comfortable to have our own apartment with everything included and to be able to cook our own meals in the evenings. This also led to a slightly smaller food bill. Kilkee offered a few restaurants and pubs with reasonable prices. There was a small grocery store in the central parts, however a bit expensive, so the most of our purchases were made in Kilrush at Tesco supermarket, just ten kilometers from Kilkee. We rented the apartment for a week to a total price of 602 Euros which meant 17 Euros per night and person. The apartment was part of Atlantic View Holiday Homes and we booked it through [www.westcoastholidays.ie](http://www.westcoastholidays.ie)

### Car-rental

We rented a car in advance from Europcar.ie at Shannon airport. There were several other companies that rented cars but we found a good deal and paid 150 Euros for eight days. For people of younger age it can be noteworthy that Ireland seems to have a quite strict age requirements which means that you have to be at least 25 years old to get a good price. There was at least one company who rented to people under 25 years old but then the price was more than four times as expensive, with not as good insurances.

### Flight

We flew from Stockholm to Shannon with a stopover at London, Heathrow. We flew with British Airways and Aer Lingus for a total price of 350 Euros per person. Since we flew to Shannon the price was a bit higher compared to if we had flown to Dublin. Instead we could reduce the car journey with a few hours and could start the trip with some great birdwatching just outside the airport.

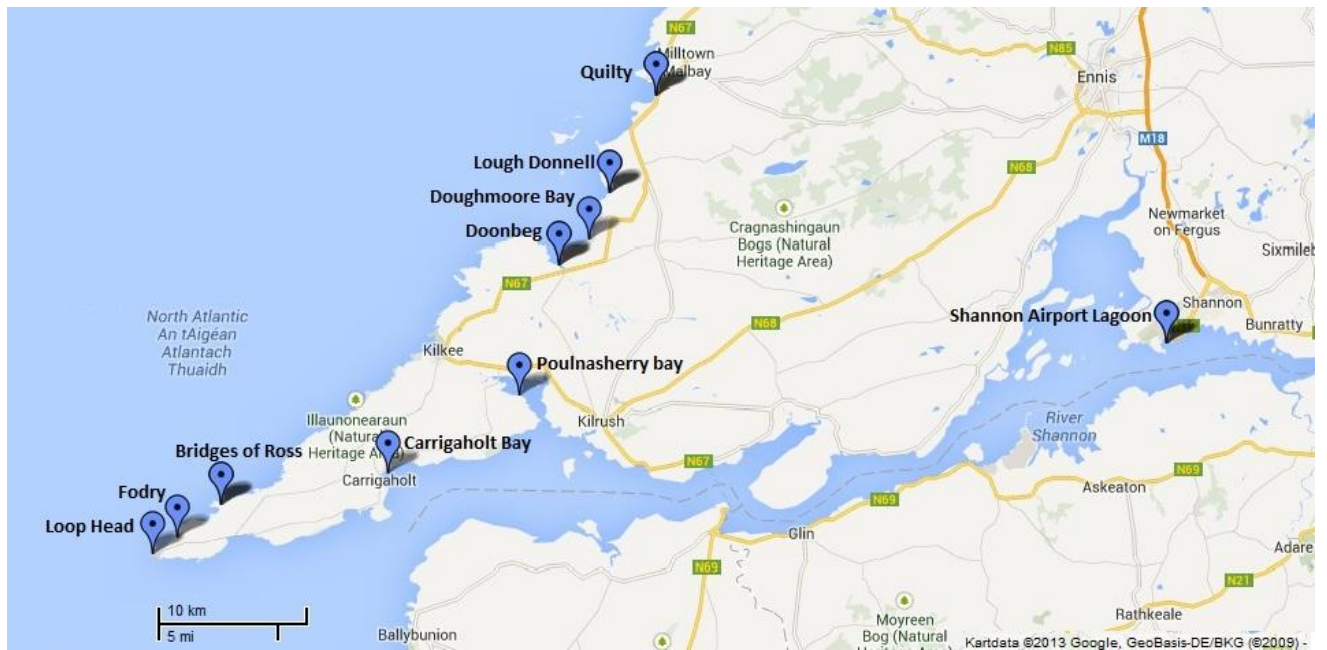
### Literature

We can really recommend Måns Grundstens report from 2005, *Ireland, western and southern parts* which offers great information of many birdwatching places including maps and

descriptions of several places. Måns's trip report can be found at club300.se; [http://club300.se/Files/TravelReports/Ireland2005\\_MG.pdf](http://club300.se/Files/TravelReports/Ireland2005_MG.pdf)

## 2. Places visited

---



### Loop Head

Laying at the very tip of the peninsula the Head is a good spot for watching seabirds. The best observation point will be at the outermost parts of the Head. The place is reached by passing the lighthouse and continuing towards the cliffs. Just before the cliffs there is a small shelf providing good shelter and view towards west/northwest. However, the observation point is situated quite high up from the water which results in very large areas to scan for birds. Many birds will therefore be difficult to spot and it will be even harder to explain for other birdwatchers to know where to look. Loop Head can be recommended as a good alternative when the wind is blowing from south and southwest which is unfavorable for Bridges of Ross. Besides the seabirds Loop Head offers good opportunities to see whales and many species such as Mink and Fin Whale have been observed.

### Fodry

Fodry is an area of meadows and pasturelands north of the Coast road between Bridges of Ross and Loop Head, also called Cloonisle. The best place to park the car is at a small grassplot on the north side of the Coast road just a few hundred meters east from the y-cross between the Coast road and road 487. The area is good for waders which during strong low pressures can be found in the grasslands or at the small pond which is situated at the western part. The area has also potential for different passerines which may feed in the pasturelands. Previously this area has turned out to be good for species such as Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

## Bridges of Ross

Most of the birding time was spent here, see table for observations. Watching seabirds at Bridges of Ross is most favorable with winds between north and west with favor for winds from northwest for close observations. There are a few good places where you can sit but the best place is reached by passing the “nature-done bridge” towards the sea. We spent most of our time at Bridges of Ross.

## Doonbeg

The Doonberg river mouth widens into a small bay which at low tide is good for waders and gulls. We had some species of waders here but not any high numbers. They bay is most easily reached if turning left into the Killard Road and then continuing straight ahead until the river mouth is reached

## Doughmoore Bay

The area is just north of Doonbeg and offers a great place for gulls and waders. The area expands along the entire White Strand Beach and during low tide high numbers of gulls can be seen feeding here. The area is best reached turning towards Doonbeg Golf Club. The car can be parked at the club house.

## Quilty

The area around the town of Quilty can be a good place for gulls. However, we did not have any spectacular or high numbers.

## Shannon Airport Lagoon

The area is one of the best on Ireland and Clare County for watching high numbers of waders often including some rare ones. Maximum yield will be given in the shift from high to low tide creating fresh mudflats perfect for waders. During our two visits we had nothing spectacular however fairly good number of Black-tailed Godwit, Common Redshank and Dunlin. The easiest and most accessible overview of the area is from the road between the airport and the car-rental offices. At low tide, the birds are further out in the lagoon and the best place to stand are out on the little man-made peninsula reaching out south from the Golf course (Grundstens report has a good map).

## Other birdwatching places

Besides the above-mentioned birdwatching places two more places could be worth mentioning, Carrigaholt Bay and Lough Donnell. Carrigaholt Bay lies at the south coast of the Loop head peninsula and Lough Donnell at the northwestern part of the coast towards Quilty. However, we did not have any spectacular at the places.

### 3. Table of counted seabirds

---

	18-aug	19-aug	20-aug	21-aug	22-aug	23-aug	Sum
<b>Place</b>	BoR	BoR	BoR	BoR	BoR	BoR	
<b>Time</b>	06:30-14:45	06:40-12:15	06:40-10:30	06:50-17:30	07:00-09:20	06:50-20:15	
	17:45-20:15	18:15-20:15	15:05-15:30		18:15-20:15		
<b>Place</b>			Loop Head				
<b>Time</b>			15:50-18:15				
<b>Hours</b>	10,75	7,08	6,07	10,67	4,33	13,42	
Common Scooter	1	18	3	1		11	<b>34</b>
Red-throated Loon		1					<b>1</b>
Northern Fulmar	837	582	150	1091	144	1196	<b>4000</b>
Cory's Shearwater	6			7		6	<b>19</b>
Greater Shearwater	19	14	4	6		36	<b>79</b>
Manx Shearwater	4535	3406	671	1270	720	2120	<b>12722</b>
Balearic Shearwater	2			2			<b>4</b>
Sooty Shearwater	49	70	102	169	27	324	<b>741</b>
Eurasian Storm-petrel	3	22	11		4	13	<b>53</b>
Leach's Storm-petrel						1	<b>1</b>
Northern Gannet	598	417	376	934	296	880	<b>3501</b>
Common Ringed Plover	2				3		<b>5</b>
Sanderling	13			13		4	<b>30</b>
Dunlin	7	1			10	11	<b>29</b>
Calidris sp.		2		10			<b>12</b>
Whimbrel	43	6	16	388	3	19	<b>475</b>
Eurasian Curlew	33	8	45	74	36	58	<b>254</b>
Bar-tailed Godwit				1		1	<b>2</b>
Ruddy Turnstone	2	4		7	2	10	<b>25</b>
Arctic-/Pomarine Skua	4	1	1				<b>6</b>
Skua sp.	1						<b>1</b>
Pomarine Skua	1	4	1	7		3	<b>16</b>
Arctic Skua	15	16	8	13	13	59	<b>124</b>
Greater Skua	14	17	11	18	5	36	<b>101</b>
Little Gull				2	1		<b>3</b>
Sabine's Gull	6	3	2	13		18	<b>42</b>
Black-headed Gull		1		13	1		<b>15</b>
Black-legged Kittiwake	174	34	100	186	99	365	<b>958</b>
Lesser Black-backed Gull	6			3	3	12	<b>24</b>
Herring Gull	19	11	4	5	7	16	<b>62</b>
Great Black-backed Gull	18	6	3	3	4	31	<b>65</b>
Sandwich Tern		4		2	17	6	<b>29</b>
Black Tern						2	<b>2</b>

Arctic Tern	12	39	26	36	10	103	<b>226</b>
Tern sp.						4	<b>4</b>
Common Guillemot	58	41	18	47	3	79	<b>246</b>
Razorbill	5	6	11	45		34	<b>101</b>
Atlantic Puffin		4					<b>4</b>
Black Guillemot				1			<b>1</b>
Common Guillemot/Razorbill	2			1			<b>3</b>
Auk sp.	2						<b>2</b>
No. species	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>29</b>	

## 4. List of recorded bird species

---

1. **Mute Swan** (*Cygnus olor*)
2. **Common Shelduck** (*Tadorna tadorna*)
3. **Eurasian Wigeon** (*Anas Penelope*)
4. **Common Teal** (*Anas crecca*)
5. **Mallard** (*Anas platyrhynchos*)
6. **Northern Shovler** (*Anas clypeata*)
7. **Common Scooter** (*Melanitta nigra*)  
See table
8. **Little Grebe** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)  
2 ex. Shannon Airport Lagoon 17/8
9. **Northern Fulmar** (*Fulmarus glacialis*)  
See table
10. **Cory's Shearwater** (*Calonectris diomedea*)  
See table
11. **Greater Shearwater** (*Puffinus gravis*)  
See table
12. **Manx Shearwater** (*Puffinus puffinus*)  
See table
13. **Balearic Shearwater** (*Puffinus mauretanicus*)  
See table
14. **Sooty Shearwater** (*Puffinus griseus*)  
See table
15. **European Storm-petrel** (*Hydrobates pelagicus*)  
See table
16. **Leach's Storm-Petrel** (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*)  
1 ex. BoR 23/8.
17. **Northern Gannet** (*Morus bassanus*)  
See table

18. **Great Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)
19. **European Shag** (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*)
20. **Little Egret** (*Egretta garzetta*)  
10 ex. Shannon Airport Lagoon 17/8, 3 ex. Poulnasherry Bay
21. **Grey Heron** (*Ardea cinerea*)
22. **Common Buzzard** (*Buteo buteo*)
23. **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** (*Accipter nisus*)
24. **Common Kestrel** (*Falco tinnunculus*)
25. **Peregrine Falcon** (*Falco peregrinus*)  
1 ex. BoR 18/8, 1 ex. Doonbeg 19/8, 1 ex. Craggaknark 19/8
26. **Common Moorhen** (*Gallinula chloropus*)  
3 ex. Shannon Airport Lagoon 17/8
27. **Common Coot** (*Fulica atra*)  
10 ex. Shannon Airport Lagoon 17/8
28. **Eurasian Oystercatcher** (*Haematopus ostralegus*)
29. **Common Ringed Plover** (*Charadrius hiaticula*)  
50 ex. Shannon Airport Lagoon 17/8
30. **Northern Lapwing** (*Vanellus vanellus*)
31. **Red Knot** (*Calidris canutus*)
32. **Sanderling** (*Calidris alba*)  
See table
33. **Dunlin** (*Calidris alpina*)  
400 ex. Shannon Airport Lagoon 17/8
34. **Black-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa limosa*)  
500 ex. Shannon Airport Lagoon 17/8
35. **Bar-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa lapponica*)
36. **Whimbrel** (*Numenius phaeopus*)  
See table
37. **Eurasian Curlew** (*Numenius arquata*)  
See table
38. **Spotted Redshank** (*Tringa erythropus*)
39. **Common Redshank** (*Tringa totanus*)  
200 ex. Shannon Airport Lagoon 17/8
40. **Common Greenshank** (*Tringa nebularia*)
41. **Common Sandpiper** (*Actitis hypoleucos*)
42. **Ruddy Turnstone** (*Arenaria interpres*)  
See table
43. **Pomarine Skua** (*Stercorarius pomarinus*)  
In total 16 individuals seen; 14 ex. 2K+ light morph, 1 ex. adult dark morph and 1 ex. 2 yr
44. **Arctic Skua** (*Stercorarius parasiticus*)  
In total 124 individuals seen. During the last two days more detailed notes on age and morph were done. In total 72 individuals were recorded divided on; 25 ex. light morph 2K+, 37 ex. dark morph 2K+ and 10 ex. first yr

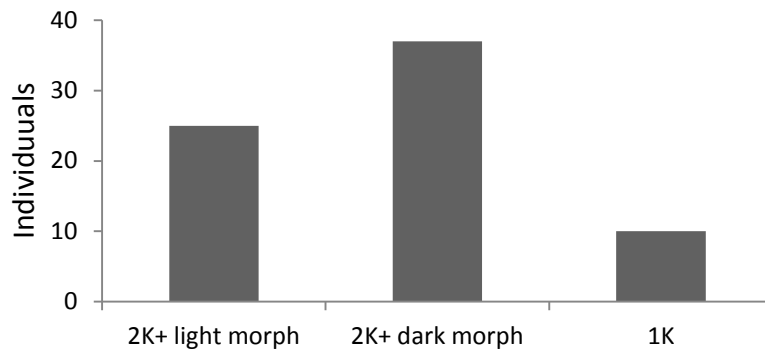


Table 1. Number of Arctic Skuas divided on birds older than one year (2K+) light or dark morph and first year birds on the 23<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of August.

45. **Greater Skua** (*Stercorarius skua*)

See table

46. **Mediterranean Gull** (*Larus melanocephalus*)

1 ex. (first year) Poulnasherry Bay 20/8



Fig. 1 Mediterranean Gull, *Larus melanocephalus*, at Poulnasherry Bay 20/8.

47. **Little Gull** (*Hydrocoloeus minutes*)

See table

48. **Sabine's Gull** (*Xema sabini*)

See table

49. **Black-headed Gull** (*Chroicocephalus ribibundus*)

See table



50. **Common Gull** (*Larus canus*)
51. **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (*Larus fuscus graellsii*)  
See table
52. **Herring Gull** (*Larus argentatus argenteus*)  
See table
53. **Great Black-backed Gull** (*Larus marinus*)  
See table
54. **Black-legged Kittiwake** (*Rissa tridactyla*)  
See table
55. **Sandwich Tern** (*Sterna sandvicensis*)  
See table
56. **Arctic Tern** (*Sterna paradisaea*)  
See table
57. **Black Tern** (*Chlidonias niger*)  
2 ex. BoR 23/8,
58. **Common Murre** (*Uria aalge*)  
See table
59. **Razorbill** (*Alca torda*)  
See table
60. **Black Guillemot** (*Cephus grylle*)  
1 ex. BoR 21/8
61. **Atlantic Puffin** (*Fratercula arctica*)  
4 ex. BoR 19/8
62. **Rock Dove** (*Columbia livia*)
63. **Feral Pigeon** (*Columbia livia domest.*)
64. **Common Wood-pigeon** (*Columba palumbus*)
65. **Eurasian Collared Dove** (*Streptopelia decaocto*)  
1 ex. Poulnasherry Bay 18/8
66. **Common Swift** (*Apus apus*)  
1 ex. Kilrush 18/8
67. **Eurasian Skylark** (*Alauda arvensis*)
68. **Common Sand Martin** (*Riparia riparia*)  
2 ex. Qulity 19/8
69. **Barn Swallow** (*Hirundo rustica*)
70. **Common House Martin** (*Delichon urbicum*)
71. **Meadow Pipit** (*Anthus pratensis*)
72. **Rock Pipit** (*Anthus petrosus*)
73. **White Wagtail** (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*)
74. **Yellow Wagtail** (*Motacilla flava*)  
1 ex. Shannon Airport Lagoon 17/8
75. **Winter Wren** (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)
76. **Dunnock** (*Prunella modularis*)
77. **European Robin** (*Erithacus rubecula*)
78. **European Stonechat** (*Saxicola rubicola*)

79. **Northern Wheatear** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)
80. **Fieldfare** (*Turdus pilaris*)
81. **Common Blackbird** (*Turdus merula*)
82. **Greater Whitethroat** (*Sylvia communis*)
83. **Willow Warbler** (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)  
1 ex. Poulnasherry Bay 18/8
84. **Goldcrest** (*Regulus regulus*)
85. **Blue Tit** (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)
86. **Common Magpie** (*Pica pica*)
87. **Eurasian Jackdaw** (*Corvus monedula*)
88. **Red-billed Chough** (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*)  
Seen almost daily at Bridge of Ross and Loop Head, 2 ex. Craggaknark 19/8
89. **Rook** (*Corvus frugilegus*)
90. **Hooded Crow** (*Corvus cornix*)
91. **Common Raven** (*Corvus corax*)
92. **European Starling** (*Sturnus vulgaris*)
93. **House Sparrow** (*Passer domesticus*)
94. **Common Chaffinch** (*Fringilla coelebs*)
95. **European Goldfinch** (*Carduelis carduelis*)
96. **Common Linnet** (*Carduelis cannabina*)
97. **Common Redpoll** (*Carduelis flammea cabaret*)  
1 ex. Cross 22/8
98. **Eurasian Bullfinch** (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)
99. **Common Reed Bunting** (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

## 5. List of other recorded species

---

1. **Common Bottlenose Dolphin** (*Tursiops truncatus*)  
Observed four out of seven days with groups in between 10-20 animals
2. **Short-beaked Common Dolphin** (*Delphinus delphis*)  
Observed every day with up to 50 individuals a day
3. **Harbor Porpoise** (*Phocoena phocoena*)  
A group of three individuals was seen one of the seven days
4. **Ocean Sunfish** (*Mola mola*)  
Observed five out of seven days with a maximum on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August with 10 individuals
5. **Mountain Hare** (*Lepus timidus*) (Irish Hare)  
5 ex. Fodry 19/8