

# Newsletter

August/October 2019



Anaclann Éan Fian Loch Garman  
Wexford Wildfowl Reserve

Welcome to the second newsletter from the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve.

In here you'll find information on what has been happening around the Centre and the environs as well as events which will be coming up in the future. As always, if you have any questions, suggestions or comments then please feel free to contact us by phone, email or through facebook.



## South Wexford new beginnings

Every year, thousands of birds arrive at Lady's Island to breed, leading to a packed few months when the Ranger monitors the different colonies and rings the young.

Split between the two islands of Inish and Sgarbheen are Black-headed Gulls, Sandwich Terns, Common Terns, Arctic and Mediterranean Gulls, whilst the Roseate Terns only nest on Inish. Numbers of breeding pairs were fairly static at 2660 pairs for the Black-headed; 1739 for the Sandwich; 1088 for the Common; 518 for the Arctic; and 63 for the Med Gulls. The numbers for Roseate Terns were down on the previous year at 194 which was the first dip in a long time and could probably be attributed to the pine marten and mink depredation the previous year which resulted in the death of a number of adults.



Left, Mediterranean Gull chick after having just been ringed, right is a Black-headed Gull chick.

At the beginning of June we had some really wet days which led to the death of a number of gull chicks. The majority of the deaths were amongst the Mediterranean gulls with the adults seemingly unable to protect the young from the worst effects of the weather.

Surveys are also carried out on the Harbour Seals to check the number and the breeding figures. On the 10<sup>th</sup> July there were found to be 35 adults and 8 pups; the first pups of the year.

## Biodiversity Week

For the first time, this year we took part in the Bealtaine Living Earth Festival in association with Waterford Institute of Technology.

The festival is the biggest biodiversity festival in Ireland and brings together a myriad of organisations throughout the South East concerned with the natural heritage and environment of our region.

We hope to expand on our events next year to appeal to a broader range of people. This year we offered pond dipping, bug hunting and mammal identification for children and families and a talk on bumblebees for the general public which was very well attended and received.

Biodiversity seems to be the buzzword of the moment but we can't treat it as a passing fad, it's something that we all have to be aware of if we're to pass this world on to the future generations in any sort of reasonable state.

## Heritage Week

**NATIONAL  
HERITAGE  
WEEK** 

Heritage Week takes place from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> August and once again we have a number of events planned throughout the week to celebrate. There will be things for both children and adults, including a butterfly walk, scavenger hunt and a late night bat walk.

Check out [heritageweek.ie](http://heritageweek.ie) for all events in the area or our own website and facebook page for further details on the events we will be running. All events are free but some will require booking.

## Our smallest mammal

Whilst participating in a bird survey in the Ballyhoura Mountains, colleagues came upon these two small mammals, both dead, within 100m of each other. The one on the right is our smallest mammal weighing about 6 grams; the native Pygmy Shrew. The one on the left is the White-toothed shrew, a non-native first discovered in Ireland in 2007, which can be about 3 times larger.

The pygmy shrew is a protected species and is distinguishable from the White-toothed not only by size but also by teeth! The pygmy has red tipped teeth due to iron deposits which help



Left, White-toothed Shrew and on the right the native Pygmy Shrew.

protect them from wear, whereas the White-toothed obviously has – white teeth!

It's not often you will see a live pygmy shrew due not only to their size but because they favour habitats rich in ground

cover. These habitats will give them cover from predators and ample scope to hunt for insects. Their size and high metabolic rate means they have to feed every few hours or they will starve.

## Schools Programme

During the past school year, over 1000 primary school children from County Wexford have taken part in our education programme. Whether that has been an indoor or outdoor workshop; at the Centre or in the Raven; lots of children have hopefully learnt at least a little about our natural environment.

Offering this service for free brings as many children as possible in touch with nature who otherwise may not have the opportunity. We believe that showing the children their natural environment, a resource which is available to all, introduces them to, or widens, their appreciation of what surrounds them.

There has certainly been a marked rise in the number of school groups who are aware of the problems facing the natural world and to hear some of those young children display such

understanding in how we all need to care for our environment, is quite frankly amazing.

The workshops are usually run from March until the end of the year when there is an education guide available. All details are available on our website or by contacting the Centre.

You can contact the Centre on

t: 076 1002660

e: [wwreducation@ahg.gov.ie](mailto:wwreducation@ahg.gov.ie)

w: [www.wexfordwildfowlreserve.ie](http://www.wexfordwildfowlreserve.ie)

f: [facebook.com/npwswexfordwildfowlreserve](https://facebook.com/npwswexfordwildfowlreserve)

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## Visitor Centre pond

The pond was refilled by the end of the June and the ducks moved back in shortly after. They were then joined by Black-headed Gull adults and juveniles presumably from Lady's Island but also a ringed Gull from Cotswolds Water Park in Gloucestershire, England.

The area no longer being dry hasn't stopped the young hares from running around the pond enclosure as you can see from the picture.



Obviously with the disturbance to the pond and the surrounding area it will take a while for things to bed in properly but hopefully over time, once nature takes hold, we'll see not just more birds but a range of insect life as well.

With the removal of the captive birds and therefore there no longer being a need to introduce grain in the area for feeding, it's envisaged that the water will remain cleaner. To this effect we actively discourage feeding the wild birds which pass through the Reserve. Not only is the feeding of bread detrimental to the bird's health but any spilled feed can attract rats and other vermin.

The only supplementary feeding we undertake at the Centre is the use of a peanut feeder for small garden birds during the colder months of the year, just like lots of people do in their own gardens.

## Cleaning up in the Raven Woods

In an ideal world, everyone who enjoys the countryside would make sure they clean up after themselves and their friends (of the four legged variety), but unfortunately we don't live in an ideal world.

That is why on June 27<sup>th</sup>, staff from the National Parks and Wildlife and the Environmental Department of Wexford County Council undertook a clean-up focusing on the problem of dog mess in the Raven. This is an ongoing problem with no quick fix solution and that is why staff will be continuing to visit the woods to monitor the situation and talk to people walking their dogs about their responsibilities.

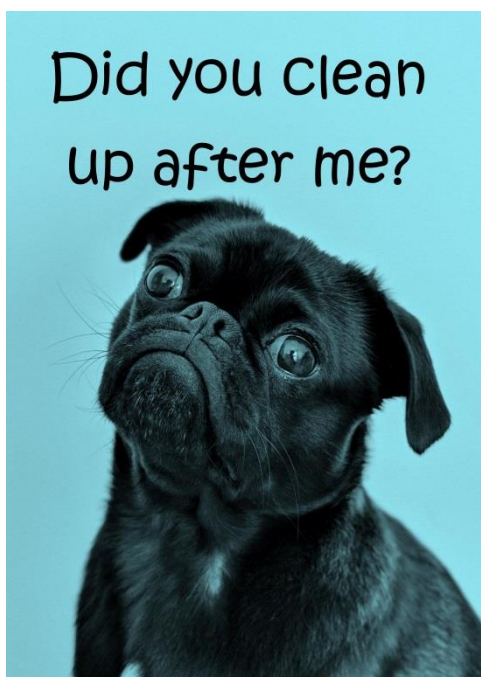
People have commented on the fact that there is only one bin for poo bags to be placed into and it is before the start of the walk in to the woods. They have asked for additional bins to be placed throughout the woods to encourage more people to use them. Unfortunately this is just not feasible for a few reasons. Primarily, it has been found that placing dog waste bins within this type of setting encourages people to place other types of rubbish near the bins, resulting in an accumulation of waste which then attracts animals and can lead to the dispersal of rubbish over the area.

Rather than more bins, it seems

we need more education. Not just in relation to dogs, but also rubbish in general.

If you're enjoying a walk in the Raven, or anywhere, don't just drop your empty wrappers and drink containers on the ground, put them in your bag; your pockets; or just carry them until you reach a bin. Not only is the litter you drop unsightly, but it's also dangerous for wildlife and the environment. Your waste will not decompose, it will just sit there, sully the landscape for years to come.

Enjoy your time in nature but make sure everyone else can enjoy it as well.



Above, staff from National Parks and Wildlife Service and Wexford County Council undertake a clean up in the Raven Woods.

