



BTO Birdwatchers Conference 2014

Birds and our Passions

An update on some bird research and bird surveying in Ireland
A chance to meet other bird enthusiasts and to get involved

Saturday 8th November 2014
Lough Neagh Discovery Centre
Oxford Island
9am – 5pm

This conference is open to everyone – you do not have to be a member of the BTO.

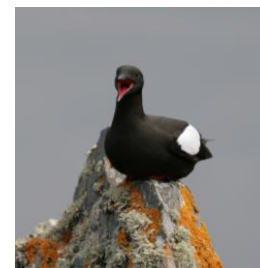
The programme for this one day conference has been designed to give everyone taking part a flavour of the breadth of bird research and survey work that is currently being undertaken in Northern Ireland – as usual, there is much more of it than most of us realise! The presentations will be short and to the point, illustrating the nature of the work, how it has been carried out and what the main results are.

Speakers



John Calladine has had a lifelong interest birds and natural history and has worked in ecological research and conservation for over 30 years. He is Senior Research Ecologist with BTO Scotland with particular interests in the impacts of land uses on bird populations and distribution. The west coast habitats of the Uists hold concentrations of breeding waders that are exceptional in a European context. Observed declines in wader populations on South Uist and Benbecula since the 1980s were argued to be largely due to predation of clutches by introduced hedgehogs. This argument, supported by evidence from the effects of their experimental removal, led to an ongoing programme of hedgehog removal. Concern remained however that breeding populations of some waders did not show the signs of recovery that might be expected in response to hedgehog control. This talk will present some of the findings of new work on the full suite of predators affecting machair waders and associations of changes in breeding wader densities with land uses. Future implications for conservation will be discussed.

Julian Greenwood is renowned for his decades long study of Black Guillemots at Bangor, Co Down. However, Julian has been a bird enthusiast all his life with Black Guillemots being just one of his passions. He is also progressive in his outlook when new technology is concerned. Consequently he has embraced the BirdTrack, and particularly its ability to store and analyse both old records and international records. Julian will give an account of BirdTrack from an enthusiastic user point of view.



David Procter and Rick Stewart operate as Spark4. They provide unique technology solutions for wildlife conservation and other sectors. Spark4 have designed and built the BTO Drone – a Small Unmanned Surveillance Aircraft (SUSA) designed specifically to perform the task of capturing the environment from new angles. Features such as the large wheelbase increase its stability whilst reducing noise, and the addition of a telephoto lens limit the interference caused to wildlife. The drone has been approved by EuroUSC, making it legal, safe and insured for commercial use. The drone, along with its sophisticated ground station, will be demonstrated at

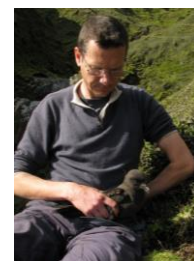
Oxford Island – weather conditions permitting.

Phil Atkinson has been at BTO for the past 15 years where he has worked on a number of subjects ranging from the ecology of waterbirds to avian influenza. He is currently Head of International Research and leads the team which uses BTO data, novel tracking technologies and a field project in West Africa to better understand why many long-distance migrants are in trouble. He will be talking about the use of new GPS tracking technology to better understand the year round movements of some of our resident gulls – Herring Gulls from Big Copeland.



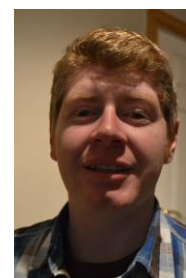
Adam McClure is one of those lucky people who, as an ecologist, gets paid to watch birds. When he's not monitoring birds for a living, he's doing it for fun and is involved with a number of organisations and projects in Northern Ireland and beyond. As well as being an active member of the NI Raptor Study Group and Copeland Bird Observatory, he is also the BTO's regional rep for Co. Antrim, an avid "BirdTracker" and a registered ringer. In 2012, Adam began a colour-ringing project which combined his passion for ringing and love of seabirds, when he started a project concentrating on one of our most familiar birds, the Black-headed Gull. His presentation will set out his reasoning for undertaking the study, what he hopes to learn from it and some of the key findings to date.

Brad Robson is RSPB's warden for Co Fermanagh, and is an immensely experienced practical conservationist. His work in Fermanagh over many years has resulted in three RSPB work areas in the county demonstrating promising reversals in the declines of key breeding wader species. Brad will summarise methods used to attain these reversals, and will outline some of the very positive results.



Aoibheann Canavan is a masters research student working at QUB with the IBIS project looking at the interactions between shellfish aquaculture and shorebirds. The rise of antibiotic resistance is a growing concern for human health worldwide. Monitoring potential sources and reservoirs of these strains will be vital to protecting public health. Many species of gull worldwide have been shown to carry resistant bacteria and as these gulls often come into close contact with food resources at aquaculture sites. To assess the threat to the aquaculture industry we sampled three species of gull in Northern Ireland and tested them for antibiotic resistance.

Jonathan Blair Jonathan has volunteered with pan European group Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) since 2010 on the island of Malta. The Maltese islands are a very important stop off point for many migrating species of birds. Unfortunately there are many poachers on the islands who kill these birds as they pass overhead. Volunteers from all over Europe annually travel to Malta to monitor the situation and prevent the illegal killing of migrating birds. Jonathan will be talking about his experiences and telling us what it's like to undertake this kind of volunteering.



Eimear Rooney, Marc Ruddock and Jim Wells are the drivers of the Northern Ireland Raptor

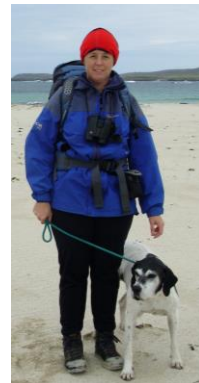


Study Group. Marc Ruddock completed his PhD study on peregrine falcon ecology at QUB, has completed post-doctoral studies on hen harriers, and worked as an environmental consultant in Scotland, NI and ROI. Eimear Rooney has completed her PhD on buzzard ecology, has been deeply involved in the red kite reintroduction in NI, and has been monitoring buzzards in NI since 2010. She joined the NIRSG as Raptor Officer in 2013, the role of

which includes co-ordinating volunteer effort in national surveys. Jim Wells is a long-serving MLA for Northern Ireland, and, more importantly to us, he is an inspirational peregrine enthusiast. Jim has been monitoring the peregrine population in Northern Ireland for over 35 years and is the Chairman of the NIRSG.

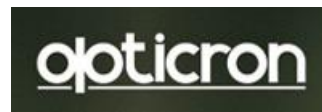
In 2014 the BTO managed the national UK peregrine survey covering England, Scotland, Wales and NI. This survey took a randomised 10km square approach and NIRSG committed to survey the Northern Ireland population as part of the on-going raptor monitoring programme partially funded by Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Marc, Eimear and Jim will provide an overview of the survey in Northern Ireland and provide us with the preliminary results and status of the NI peregrine population.

Chris Wernham, a BTO Senior Research Ecologist and Head of BTO Scotland is responsible for leading the work of BTO Scotland, and overseeing its programme of research and the activities that underpin development of its supporter base. Chris is also a member of the BTO overall management team, and has been involved in the development of BTO strategy that will guide the organisation over the next 10 years, including the role that BTO supporters in Northern Ireland will play. This will put what we are doing in NI in context, and thus increase our understanding of how each of us is contributing to conservation policy and planning.



Shane Wolsey is the BTO representative in Northern Ireland and is responsible for overseeing the implementation of all BTO bird surveys in the region. He has been instrumental in winning funding from the NGO Challenge Fund for the design and development of the BTO drone, and is keen to explore how this technology might be used for environmental monitoring. He will update us on the current state of the BTO drone project and how it is to be tested over the coming months.

Conference supporters:



Provisional Programme

NB: the time of each talk may change to allow us to demonstrate the drone in good weather conditions.

09.00 am	Registration	
09.30	Welcome and Introduction	Shane Wolsey, BTO NI, and Joe Furphy
09.40	NI Peregrine Survey 2014	Eimear Rooney, Marc Ruddock and Jim Wells
10.05	Breeding waders of the Uist machair: Land use and predators, past, present and future	John Calladine, BTO
10.30	Management for Breeding Waders in Fermanagh – reversing the decline	Brad Robson, RSPB
10.55	Coffee	
11.25	Volunteering for bird protection in Malta	Jonathan Blair
11.45	BTO drone in NI	Shane Wolsey, BTO NI
12.00	Drone demonstration	David Procter & Rick Stewart, Spark 4
12.50 pm	Lunch	
2.00	Gull Tracking in NI	Phil Atkinson, BTO
2.25	Antibiotic Resistance Profile of Gulls in Northern Ireland	Aoibheann Canavan, QUB
2.40	"I thought you were only interested in rare birds...."	Adam McClure
3.00	Coffee	
3.30	BirdTrack, citizen-science and you.	Julian Greenwood
4.00	BTO strategy and NI	Chris Wernham, BTO Scotland
4.25	Conference Round-up	Joe Furphy
4.30	Close	



Optical Event Gavin Gould & Son will again provide an opportunity to try out the latest binoculars, telescopes and other optical equipment. The event is being sponsored by Opticron, but you will have the opportunity to compare the top brands and judge for yourself which best suits your needs. Gavin always provides a brilliant service, and has some very competitive prices.



Book Sale David Cabot will be back again this year with his large stock of second hand books for sale. This will be an opportunity for you to finally buy that out-of-print book that you have been looking for, or to simply pick up a bargain, or perhaps a Christmas gift. Don't miss it!

Booking Form

The cost is £25 per person, which includes registration, coffee and lunch (finger buffet). However, an earlybird booking discount reduces this to £22 per person if you book and pay by 31st October. A concessionary rate of £20 is available for senior citizens and those that are not in full-time employment – earlybird booking discount makes this £18. Cheques should be made out to “British Trust for Ornithology”. Booking, even if you are going to pay at the door, is essential!

Booking To book a place, please complete the form below and send it with your cheque to:

Shane Wolsey
BTO Ireland
25 Ballyholme Esplanade
Bangor
Co Down BT20 5LZ

Tel: 028 9146 7947
Mob: 07831 697371
Email: shane.wolsey@bto.org

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Please circle as appropriate

Earlybird rate
(until 31st Oct)

Late payment or at door

Normal admission £22 £25 (€30)

Senior citizen or not in full time
employment £18 £20 (€25)

There are three ways to pay. Please tick as appropriate:

- I enclose a cheque (Sterling only) for £_____ made out to ‘British Trust for Ornithology’
- Please charge my credit card: card number: _____ Expiry date: _____
Name on card: _____ CVV number: _____
Address on card (if different from above) _____
- Cash at door. I am not keen on this, but if you are coming from the South and paying cash at the door, please pre-book your place using this form – it is essential for me to know who is coming for catering purposes. If you book and cannot come, then please let me know – otherwise I will end up paying catering costs for you.