



## BTO Birdwatchers Conference 2018

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

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2018  
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.**

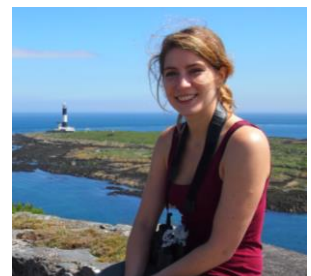
The programme for this one day conference has been designed to give everyone taking part a flavour of the breadth of bird research and survey work, along with some conservation work, that is currently being undertaken in Ireland north and south (and elsewhere) – as usual, there is much more of it than most of us realise!

### Speakers



**Dave Suddaby** moved to County Mayo in 2002 to work for BirdWatch Ireland on restoring habitats for Corncrakes and breeding waders. Today he is their Reserves Manager and his talk is focused on one of their reserves known as Annagh Marsh. This is a small area of marsh on the Mullet peninsula made famous through the early to mid-1900's as the most regular, most southerly breeding site in the world for an intriguing wader known as the Red-necked Phalarope, which were described by the travelling botanist Praeger as 'fairy-like birds'. The talk will describe BWI's work at the marsh over the last 50 years, then nick-named 'the bird cage', which has seen the return of breeding Red-necked Phalarope after a 30 year absence, alongside their efforts in safeguarding breeding Lapwings which are rapidly declining in breeding numbers on the machair grassland systems.

**Katherine Booth Jones** Urban gulls often get bad press in seaside towns and cities, but gulls have been slower to take up roof-nesting in Ireland than in Britain. Discovering where gulls are foraging in Belfast has the potential to help mitigate human-gull conflicts in the future. This May, BTO NI fitted four male Lesser Black-backed Gulls with state-of-the-art Global Positioning System (GPS) tags on the rooftops of Belfast city centre. Initial results from this breeding season clearly show that each gull has his own favourite foraging area when he is looking for food for his chick. In this talk, Katherine will present some of the initial findings on the foraging distribution of the city gulls and reveal where these individuals have migrated to for winter. Katherine will also share information on how keen birders can contribute to the ongoing NI Lowland Breeding Wader Survey.



**John Quinn** has had a lifelong interest in birds. After studying oystercatchers and roseate terns in Dublin Bay in the late 1980s, he worked for the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, UK, at Slimbridge and Martin Mere in England, and Caerlaverock in Scotland. In 2000 he completed his PhD at the University of Oxford on red-breasted geese in the Russian Arctic. Later at Oxford he became interested in understanding how predators affect the behaviour of birds, and of the role that personality and intelligence plays in determining how birds survive in the wild. John moved back to Ireland in 2012, where he is Professor in Zoology, and heads UCC Ornithology, a research group that is interested in a wide range of projects on the ecology and conservation of birds. His talk will give an overview of his research interests, past and present.



**Neal Warnock** is Conservation Advisor Officer with RSPB. There are now fewer than 500 pairs of breeding curlew in Northern Ireland. Neal Warnock, Conservation Advisor for RSPB NI works in one of their last remaining strongholds in the country. Neal's talk will describe the various projects and work with local landowners that are keeping the call of the curlew alive in the Antrim Hills.



**Neil Morris** cut his birdwatching teeth in his home county of Sussex. He graduated from Bristol University with Honours in Botany and Zoology. Following various marketing and management roles at National Trust, RSPB and RNL, Neil helped to establish the Institute of Direct and Digital Marketing where he served as Deputy Managing Director. A career break took Neil and his family to Qatar, after which he moved to the Isle of Man in 2014. Neil is Managing Director of Manx BirdLife and a Trustee of the Manx Wildlife Trust. He is a founding member of the Qatar Bird Records Committee on which he continues to serve as secretary, and is a serving member of both the Manx Rare Birds Committee and committee of the Manx Ornithological Society.



**Eimear Rooney & PSNI** Raptor persecution persists across NI and remains a UK wildlife crime priority. In 2017 a joint initiative between PSNI, NIRSG and NIEA was launched in a bid to help tackle this strand of wildlife crime. In 'Operation Peregrine Watch' a dedicated team from the PSNI Air Support Unit (ASU) used 'drones', fitted with specialist cameras to monitor peregrine nest sites in 'hot-spot' crime areas to assist in prevention of persecution, and if possible to catch perpetrators in the act. Eimear Rooney will provide a summary of 'Operation Peregrine Watch'. She has been Raptor Officer with the NIRSG since 2013 and represents the group in the Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime (PAW NI). Her primary role at PAW NI is to drive partnership working to help raise awareness of, and prevent, raptor persecution. She also collates persecution data from PSNI and others to produce hot-spot maps for targeting resources. Eimear is an active raptor ecologist and has several BTO licenced projects in NI.

**Phil Atkinson** is Head of International Research at BTO and works on migration. He is also the BTO lead on Movetech Telemetry which designs and makes tracking devices for wildlife. Movetech is made up of four partners (BTO and the Universities of East Anglia, Lisbon and Porto) who collaborate to develop new tracking solutions for researchers. Like mobile phones, wildlife tracking tags have come a long way from the brick-like devices in the 1980s to sleek, super-sophisticated devices of today. In many cases, today's wildlife tags owe a lot to the miniaturisation and mass-production of components for mobile phones and researchers can now collect so much more than just dots on maps. The inclusion of additional simple sensors, such as barometers, allow us to accurately track flight heights but more sophisticated sensors can tell us a lot about an animal's behaviour - is it resting, feeding, walking, flying etc. Coupled with masses of earth observation data from satellites, we are now in an age where we can really piece together what animals are doing and in what habitats, almost in real time. Next generation tags will be smarter than current devices and will take decisions about what to do next depending on the data they collect and allow us to explore aspects of an animal's life in much more detail than before.



**John Calladine** is a life-long birder. He has worked in conservation and related science for 36 years much of it spent in the British uplands, with the odd foray into seabirds and other such things. Now a Senior Research Ecologist with the BTO based in Stirling, where he has been since 2002, leading research programmes related to forest and upland management (and still with the odd foray into seabirds and other things). In describing BTO's attempts to understand one of the least understood, perhaps misunderstood, birds, the talk will include new and surprising findings on habitat use, movements and behaviour from ongoing satellite telemetry studies.



**Stuart Newson** is a Senior Research Ecologist at the BTO, where he is mainly involved in survey design and analyses of data from large 'Citizen Science' surveys. Whilst the core of his work has been on birds, he has a personal interest in bats and acoustic monitoring, and in particular how technology can deliver new opportunities for conservation. Stuart set up the Norfolk Bat Survey [www.batsurvey.org](http://www.batsurvey.org) in 2013, a novel citizen science approach for enabling unprecedented large-scale bat recording using static acoustic detectors, an approach which has since been extended to a much larger area of southern Scotland, with plans now to develop this idea more widely, and to extend this to other species groups. Being awarded a Research Fellowship at the BTO, Stuart has worked on a variety of topics under the heading "Bats, Bush-crickets and the Science of Monitoring".

**Hugh Thurgate** has been working in countryside management for 31 years, including as Head Warden at Murlough NNR, and for the last 17 years with the National Trust on Strangford Lough, responsible for managing and carrying out the seabird monitoring programme on the Lough since 2002. He has been undertaking the annual ringing of sandwich tern pulli since the late 1960's. Hugh will briefly review recent trends of the four species of tern that have bred/breed on the Lough, demonstrating that changes in abundance are cause for concern. He will summarise the threat to specific breeding sites from coastal erosion, present anecdotal evidence of predation events occurring at the main colonies in recent years.



**Shane Wolsey** is the BTO representative in Northern Ireland and is responsible for overseeing the implementation of all BTO bird surveys in the region. However, he also works independently for others, and it is in this role that he reports on work he had undertaken during the 2018 breeding season for The National Trust on the terns of Strangford Lough. Some of the causes of the poor productivity of these terns will be revealed.

**And also:**



**Optical Event** Gavin Gould & Son will again provide an opportunity to try out the latest binoculars, telescopes and other optical equipment. 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!

**Art exhibition** Local birdwatcher and artist, James O'Neill, will be displaying, and selling, some of his art work. Take the opportunity to see some excellent work, and perhaps buy yourself another Christmas present!



**Tracking technology exhibition**

Movetech brings together expertise from BTO and three academic partners (University of East Anglia, University of Lisbon and InBIO Research Network) to provide cutting-edge tracking devices for scientific research projects. Their tags have been used successfully on a wide variety of bird species ranging from raptors, storks, gannets, boobies, frigatebirds, bustards and gulls.



## Provisional Programme

NB: Timings and the running order might change!

09.00 am	Registration	
	Conference Chair	Joe Furphy
09.30	Welcome and Introduction	Shane Wolsey, BTO NI
09.40	Curlew Conservation in the Antrim Hills	Neal Warnock, RSPB NI
10.00	Operation Peregrine Watch: Putting eyes in the skies	Eimear Rooney & PSNI
10.20	Beyond points on a map - what will a new generation of smart tags tell us?	Phil Atkinson, BTO
10.50	Coffee	
11.30	Ornithology at UCC: seabird ecology, great tit intelligence, and other topics	John Quinn, University College Cork
12.00	Fairy-like birds & the cage	Dave Suddaby, BWI
12.00	Citizen science in the dark: passive acoustic monitoring for the masses	Stuart Newson, BTO HQ
1.00 pm	Lunch	
2.00	Short-eared Owls: tracking their movements and other attempts to understand them	John Calladine, BTO Scotland
2.30	The fortunes of Strangford terns	Hugh Thurgate, The National Trust, and Shane Wolsey
3.00	Coffee	
3.45	Manx BirdLife and the birds of Mann	Neil Morris, Manx BirdLife
4.15	Gull tracking in Belfast takes flight: reviewing tracking data of the first breeding season	Katherine Booth Jones, BTO NI
4.35	Conference Round-up	Joe Furphy
4.45	Close	

### Conference supporters:



## Booking Form

The cost is £25 per person, which includes registration, coffee and lunch (finger buffet). However, an early-bird booking discount reduces this to £23 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 – early-bird booking discount makes this £19. 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, go online, or 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Please circle as appropriate</b>	Earlybird rate (until 31st Oct)	Late payment or at door
Normal admission	£23	£25 (€25)
Senior citizen or not in full time employment	£19	£20 (€20)

There are four ways to pay. Book and pay online at: XXXXXXXX or tick one of the following as appropriate and return the form to me:

I enclose a cheque (Sterling only) for £\_\_\_\_\_ made out to ‘British Trust for Ornithology’

Please charge my credit card (complete the following or phone me with the details):

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.