

CORK HARBOUR I-WEBS COUNTS: SUMMARY REPORT FOR THE WINTER OF 2011/12

INTRODUCTION

This document presents a summary of the Cork Harbour I-WeBS counts carried out between September 2011 and March 2012. Please note that the species totals in this document are provisional and do not represent official I-WeBS data.

COVERAGE

Coordinated counts were complete in each month. Complete coverage was achieved in the September, November and December counts. There is data missing for some of the subsites in the October and January-March counts. The count totals for October, January and February are probably not affected to a large degree, but the count for March will be a substantial underestimate.

For the purposes of count coordination, the subsites have been divided into groups, where there is likely to be significant daily movement between subsites within the same group, but little movement over the short-term between the groups (see Figure 1). Most counts were completed on the Saturday or Sunday of the nominated weekend. However, apart from within the Inner group, it proved difficult to have all counts within groups completed on the same day due to counter commitments (Table 1). Counts of the Saleen-Whitegate subsites were often carried out on the Monday or Tuesday after the nominated weekend, due to the lack of a regular counter for these subsites. These subsites are relatively isolated and it seems reasonable to assume that there is likely to be little short-term movement between these subsites and the other subsites in Cork Harbour. However, an effort has been made in 2012/13 to make sure that the counts in Saleen-Whitegate are carried out on the Saturday or Sunday of the nominated weekend.

Table 1. Coverage and coordination of Cork Harbour I-WeBS counts, 2011/12

Group	Subsites	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
West	Owenboy	17/9	-	20/11	17/12	21/1	21/2	17/3
	Lough Beg	18/9	22/10	20/11	18/12	21/1	20/2	17/3
Inner	Douglas	17/9	22/10	19/11	18/12	21/1	18/2	18/3
	Dunkettle	17/9	22/10	19/11	18/12	21/1	18/2	17/3
	Glounthaune	18/9	22/10	19/11	18/12	21/1	19/2	18/3
North	Belvelly	18/9	22/10	20/11	18/12	21/1	19/2	-
	North Channel (south)	18/9	22/10	20/11	18/12	21/1	19/2	18/3
	North Channel (north)	18/9	22/10	19/11	17/12	22/1	18/2	18/3
	Midleton	17/9	23/10	20/11	17/12	-	-	-
	East	Saleen-Whitegate	18/9	24/10	19/11	19/12	22/1	21/2

Owenboy = Owenboy Estuary (0L454) subsite; Lough Beg-Monkstown = Lough Beg (0L453) and Monkstown Creek (0L496) subsites; Douglas = Douglas Estuary (0L488) subsite; Dunkettle = Dunkettle (0L486); Glounthaune = Glounthane Estuary/ Slatty Water (0L489) subsite; Belvelly = Carrigrenan Pools (0L 041), Belvelly Tower (0L424), Belvelly Bridge – Railway (0L425), Carrigrenan - Great Island & Railway (0L426) and East Lough Mahon (0L452) subsites; North Channel (south) = North Channel – Ballintubbrid (0L492); North Channel (north) = Weir Island (0L469), Ballintubbrid (0L482) and Brick Island (0L487) subsites; Midleton = Rathcoursey & Ahanesk (0L415) and Ballynacorra (0L484) subsites; Saleen-Whitegate = Rostellan Lake (0L099), Aghada (0L490), Whitegate Bay (0L491) and Saleen (0L498) subsites

WATERBIRD NUMBERS

Total monthly counts are shown in Table 2. The incomplete coverage in the October, January and February counts probably reduced the totals of the commoner ducks and waders by no more than 50-100. The totals for March for many species will be substantial underestimates. Gulls are not counted in all subsites, and, in any case, the subsites will only cover a small proportion of their total Cork harbour populations.

Many of the commoner species showed a unimodal pattern of occurrence with peaks in mid or late winter. The Redshank counts were very consistent, varying between 1209-1354 between October and February. The variable seasonal patterns of the Oystercatcher, Black-tailed Godwit and Curlew counts are probably due to variable numbers of field-feeding birds being included in the counts depending on the behaviour of individual flocks on the day of the counts.

The most recent review of waterbird numbers in Cork Harbour covered the period 1994/95-2002/03 (Gittings, 2006). While annual maxima for subsequent winters have been published in I-WeBS reports, these need to be interpreted with caution as there are (or were at the time that the reports were published) missing data for many of these winters. Shelduck and Redshank numbers in 2011/12 were much lower than in the 1994/95-2002/03 period, when both these species regularly occurred in numbers of over 2,000. Lapwing numbers declined from over 10,000 to under 5,000 during the 1994/95-2002/03 period, and the 2011/12 numbers indicate a continued decline. However, Dunlin numbers may have stabilised having also previously declined from 10-12,000 to 5,000 over the 1994/95-2002/03 period. Little Egret numbers remain low compared to the period immediately before the severe winters of 2009/10 and 2010/11 when autumn peaks of around 150 were recorded.

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REFERENCE

Gittings, T. (2006). Waterbird monitoring in Cork Harbour: 1994/95-2002/03. In C. Cronin, C. Barton, H. Hussey, & M. Carmody (Eds.), (pp. 319–339). Cork: Cork Bird Report Editorial Team.

Table 2. Monthly totals of the Cork Harbour I-WeBS counts, 2011/12

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Max
Great Northern Diver				3	2			3
Little Grebe	43	74	76	88	43	27	8	88
Great Crested Grebe	29	89	136	127	65	165	11	165
Cormorant	167	203	317	190	271	229	63	317
Little Egret	67	40	33	21	16	21	19	67
Grey Heron	44	64	70	38	17	17	16	70
Mute Swan	42	34	34	26	33	40	45	45
Canada Goose	2	14	13	10	12	6		14
Light-bellied Brent Goose			8	52	39	58		58
Shelduck	8	43	465	681	1140	948	439	1140
Wigeon	15	475	820	1137	1407	1468	237	1468
Gadwall	4	1		22	18	2	9	22
Teal	174	534	612	632	713	929	488	929
Mallard	400	205	386	416	303	248	161	416
Pintail			8	5	1	31		31
Shoveler		12	7	8	20	7	33	33
Pochard					1			1
Tufted Duck		2	8		17	25	26	26
Goldeneye			3	6	2	20		20
Red-breasted Merganser		16	20	71	30	68	8	71
Moorhen	21	14	9	11	10	16	13	21
Coot	5			1	2	2	9	9
Oystercatcher	1939	1281	1028	803	1220	930	400	1939
Ringed Plover	23	8			29	8		29
Golden Plover	19	3204	3200	5211	4600	536	34	5211
Grey Plover			9	35		23		35
Lapwing	18	371	2217	1709	1792	378	4	2217
Knot	3	8	109	16	178	64	10	178
Dunlin	39	600	2419	5068	4338	2771	72	5068
Snipe			25	34	7	22	3	34
Black-tailed Godwit	2955	2154	1155	700	2209	2015	1896	2955
Bar-tailed Godwit	132	312	218	242	244	302	131	312
Whimbrel	1	2			1	2	1	2
Curlew	1662	978	887	623	1357	1197	324	1662
Redshank	1062	1297	1352	1209	1219	1354	552	1354
Greenshank	88	78	71	66	55	40	60	88
Turnstone	98	207	206	119	86	126	22	207
Kingfisher	1		3				1	3
Black-headed Gull	1543	604	1375	1463	1442	3417	1065	3417
Common Gull	20	55	131	65	81	128	81	131
Lesser Black-backed Gull	55	65	72	27	9	47	16	72
Herring Gull	37	65	74	13	3	5	7	74
Great Black-backed Gull	89	150	42	25		4	8	150
Sparrowhawk			2					2
Buzzard						2		2
Peregrine		1			1			1

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	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Max
Shag			4	6				6
Ruddy Shelduck			2	2	2			2
Common Scoter			4			1		4
Surf Scoter			1					1
Eider			1					1
Spotted Redshank					1	5	7	7
Green Sandpiper					1			1
Wilson's Phalarope	1							1
Ring-billed Gull							2	2
Mediterranean Gull	8	1	1	4			1	8
Little Gull		1						1
Sandwich Tern	104						2	104
Black Guillemot	1	1	19					19

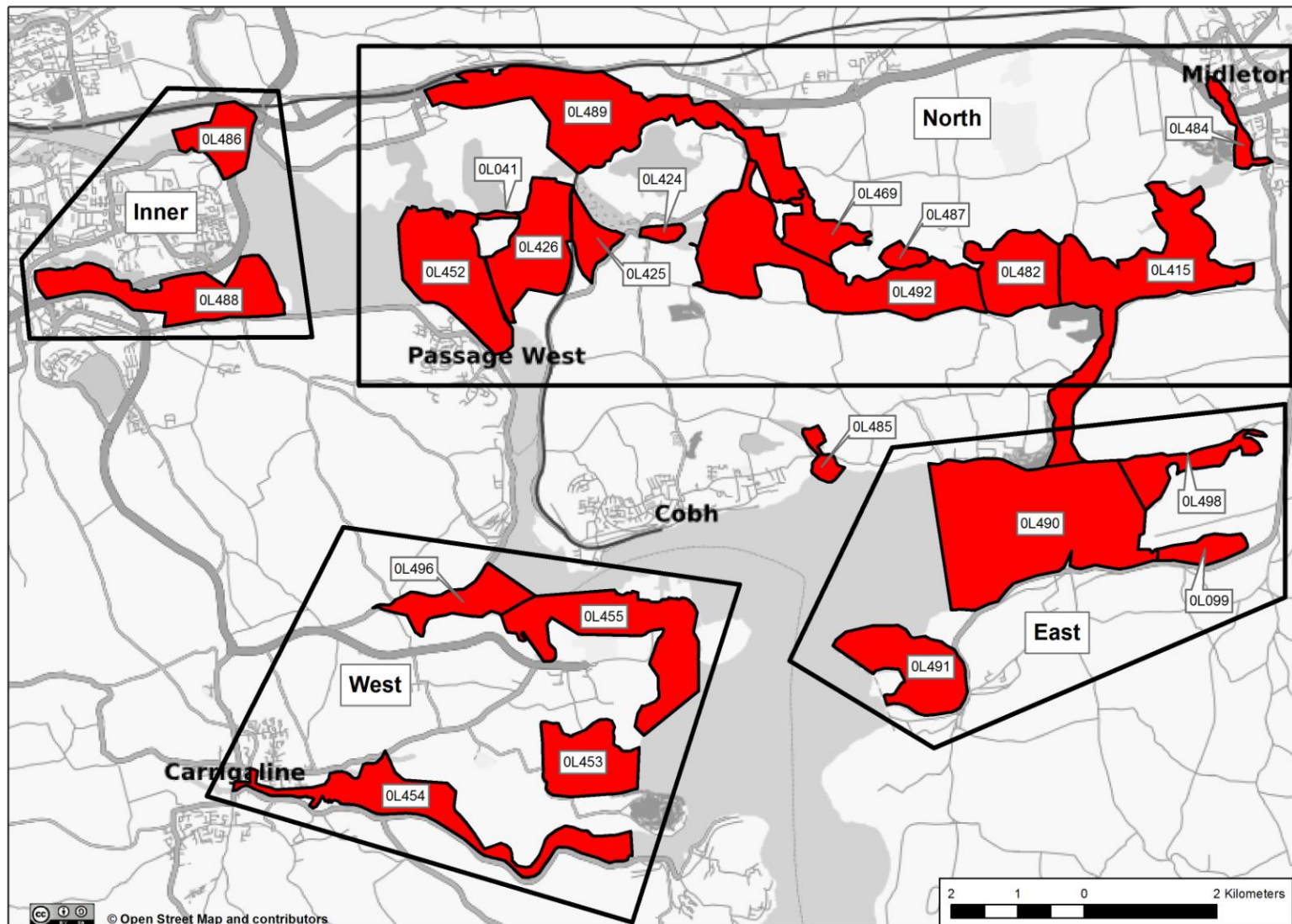


Figure 1. Cork Harbour I-WeBS subsites (note, any subsite amendments submitted with the roost questionnaires are not included)