

## CORK HARBOUR I-WEBS COUNTS: SUMMARY REPORT FOR THE WINTER OF 2012/13

### INTRODUCTION

This document presents a summary of the Cork Harbour I-WeBS counts carried out between September 2012 and April 2013. Please note that the species totals in this document are provisional and do not represent official I-WeBS data.

### COVERAGE

Coordinated counts were completed in six months: September, October, November, January, February and April. The April count was carried out principally to target the spring Black-tailed Godwit migration period.

Complete coverage was achieved in the October, January, February and April counts. There is data missing for some of the subsites in the September and November counts (Table 1).

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). The large North group has been further divided into subgroups. Most counts were completed on the Saturday or Sunday of the nominated weekend. The October count was postponed due to lack of counters by a week, but the Owenboy subsite was counted on the original count weekend (a week earlier than the other counts). It generally proved difficult to have all counts within groups completed on the same day due to counter commitments (Table 1), although the subsites within each subgroup in the North group were usually counted on the same day.

**Table 1. Coverage and coordination of Cork Harbour I-WeBS counts, 2012/13**

Group	Subgroup	Subsites	Sep	Oct	Nov	Jan	Feb	Apr
<b>West</b>		Owenboy	22/09	21/10	24/11	19/01	16/02	20/04
		Lough Beg-Monkstown	22/09	27/10	25/11	20/01	17/02	21/04
<b>Inner</b>		Douglas	22/09	27/10	25/11	19/01	16/02	20/04
		Dunkettle	-	27/10	-	20/01	16/02	20/04
<b>North</b>	<b>Belvelly-Glounthaune</b>	Glounthaune	23/09	27/10	25/11	19/01	17/02	20/04
		Belvelly	23/09	27/10	25/11	19/01	17/02	20/04
	<b>North Channel</b>	North Channel (south)	23/09	26/10	25/11	19/01	16/02	20/04
		North Channel (north)	23/09	28/10	25/11	19/01	16/02	20/04
	<b>Midleton</b>	Rathcoursey-Ballynacorra	-	29/10	25/11	19/01	16/02	20/04
<b>East</b>		Saleen-Whitegate	22/09	29/10	24/11	20/01	16 or 17/02	20/04

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 = Glounthaune 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; Rathcoursey-Ballynacorra = 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 for all the species recorded are shown in Table 2 and 3. The monthly counts of selected species in 2011/12 and 2012/13 are compared in Table 4. Note that 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.

The incomplete coverage in the September and November counts will have reduced the totals of most of the commoner species and the reduction may have been substantial for some species. This might explain the size of the reduction in the annual maxima for Oystercatcher and Curlew as their peak numbers normally occur in September and they can occur in significant numbers in the subsites that were not covered in September. However, the mean counts for these species across October, November, January and February were lower in 2012/13 (Oystercatcher, 2011/12 mean = 1115, 2012/13 mean = 948; Curlew, 2011/12 mean = 1105, 2012/13 mean = 885). Wigeon numbers were also lower in 2012/13, due to lower numbers in January and February counts across the main Wigeon subsites in the Inner and North groups (although numbers were higher in the East group).

Although the maxima for Black-tailed Godwit were similar in both winters, the 2012/13 maxima came from spring passage during the April count (which was not covered in 2011/12). The September and October counts in 2012/13 were unusually low.

The biggest increase in the annual maxima was shown by Redshank. This maxima occurred on the October count, with exceptional numbers in the North Channel-Ballintubbrid subsite. Numbers in the other months were similar to (November and January; although the November count was probably an underestimate due to shooting disturbance in Whitegate), or lower than (September and February), the 2011/12 counts. The low September count may, again, have been due to the incomplete coverage.

Teal and Dunlin also had higher maximum counts in 2012/13. In the case of Teal, the higher numbers in the January and February counts probably reflect the lack of coverage of the Midleton subsites in January and February 2012 (these subsites held 347 and 131 Teal in January and February 2013). Dunlin counts are quite variable due to the difficulty of obtaining accurate counts at some of their most important roosts.

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 numbers in 2011/12 and 2012/13 were much lower than in the 1994/95-2002/03 period, when they regularly occurred in numbers of over 2,000. Redshank also regularly occurred in similar numbers in the 1994/95-2002/03 period, so the recent counts indicate a decline. Lapwing numbers declined from over 10,000 to under 5,000 during the 1994/95-2002/03 period, and the 2011/12 and 2012/12 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.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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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 regularly occurring species in the Cork Harbour I-WeBS counts, 2012/13**

Species	Monthly counts 2012/13						Annual maxima	
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Jan	Feb	Apr	2011/12	2012/13
Mute Swan	32	29	14	40	33	14	45	40
Canada Goose	10	7	14	11			14	14
Light-bellied Brent Goose		11	15	60	31	55	58	60
Shelduck		202	465	1281	1109	308	1140	1281
Wigeon	2	348	914	1056	844	1	1468	1056
Teal	115	374	602	1251	1034	39	929	1251
Mallard	186	284	319	288	216	52	416	319
Pintail			8	6	2		31	8
Shoveler		3	6	11	19		33	19
Tufted Duck		25	51	21	44	6	26	51
Goldeneye		1	8	23	7	1	20	23
Red-breasted Merganser		15	22	42	50	2	71	50
Great Northern Diver			6	3	5	1	3	6
Little Grebe	27	27	55	62	33	4	88	62
Great Crested Grebe	82	110	117	66	66		165	117
Cormorant	122	363	308	190	90	135	317	363
Shag	2	1	5	4	1	2	6	5
Little Egret	64	53	33	12	20	21	67	64
Grey Heron	47	35	49	13	24	13	70	49
Moorhen	10	15	13	9	7	6	21	15
Coot	1	1	6	11	8	4	9	11
Oystercatcher	1207	1294	899	836	764	340	1939	1294
Ringed Plover		29	2	6	20		29	29
Golden Plover		59	6900	2800	3200		5211	6900
Grey Plover		10	9	36	31		35	36
Lapwing	10	354	1169	1934	294		2217	1934
Knot	2	20	17	23	230		178	230
Dunlin	10	697	1390	4261	6789	151	5068	6789
Snipe			55	23	15		34	55
Black-tailed Godwit	1633	1404	1037	767	1826	2770	2955	2770
Bar-tailed Godwit	203	169	139	351	334	9	312	351
Whimbrel		2	1	2	1	67	2	67
Curlew	1234	1139	506	628	1266	58	1662	1266
Redshank	697	1739	1259	1284	978	278	1354	1739
Greenshank	61	82	57	44	40	5	88	82
Turnstone	61	13	151	83	177	24	207	177
Black-headed Gull	1754	1334	1608	2067	1410	561	3417	2067
Common Gull	47	41	58	199	200	4	131	200
Mediterranean Gull	43		11	2	30		8	43
Herring Gull	54	17	7	12	70	57	74	70
Lesser Black-backed Gull	58	117	26	18	167	50	72	167
Great Black-backed Gull	116	81	15	68	25	45	150	116

**Table 3. Monthly totals of scarce species in the Cork Harbour I-WeBS counts, 2012/13**

Species	Monthly counts 2012/13						Annual maxima	
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Jan	Feb	Apr	2011/12	2012/13
Pink-footed Goose			1				0	1
Ruddy Shelduck			2	2			2	2
Gadwall		3				12	22	12
Pochard				1			1	1
Scaup		1	1				0	1
Eider			1	1			1	1
Common Scoter			1				4	1
Slavonian Grebe			1	1	1		0	1
Black-necked Grebe					1		0	1
Buzzard	6		2	1			2	6
Peregrine			1	1			1	1
Water Rail		1	1		1		0	1
Ruff			1				0	1
Spotted Redshank			4		3		7	4
Green Sandpiper			1				1	1
Yellow-legged Gull	2						0	2
Sandwich Tern	85					9	104	85
Common Tern						1	0	1
Arctic Tern						5	0	5
Unidentified terns	60						0	60
Black Guillemot			2	5			19	5
Kingfisher				1			3	1

**Table 4. Comparison of monthly counts for selected species with big changes in their annual maxima between 2011/12 and 2012/13**

Species	Season	Sep	Oct	Nov	Jan	Feb
Wigeon	2011/12	15	475	820	1407	1468
	2012/13	2	348	914	1056	844
Teal	2011/12	174	534	612	713	929
	2012/13	115	374	602	1251	1034
Oystercatcher	2011/12	1939	1281	1028	1220	930
	2012/13	1207	1294	899	836	764
Dunlin	2011/12	39	600	2419	4338	2771
	2012/13	10	697	1390	4261	6789
Black-tailed Godwit	2011/12	2955	2154	1155	2209	2015
	2012/13	1663	1404	1037	767	1826
Curlew	2011/12	1662	978	887	1357	1197
	2012/13	1234	1139	506	628	1266
Redshank	2011/12	1062	1297	1352	1219	1354
	2012/13	697	1739	1259	1284	978

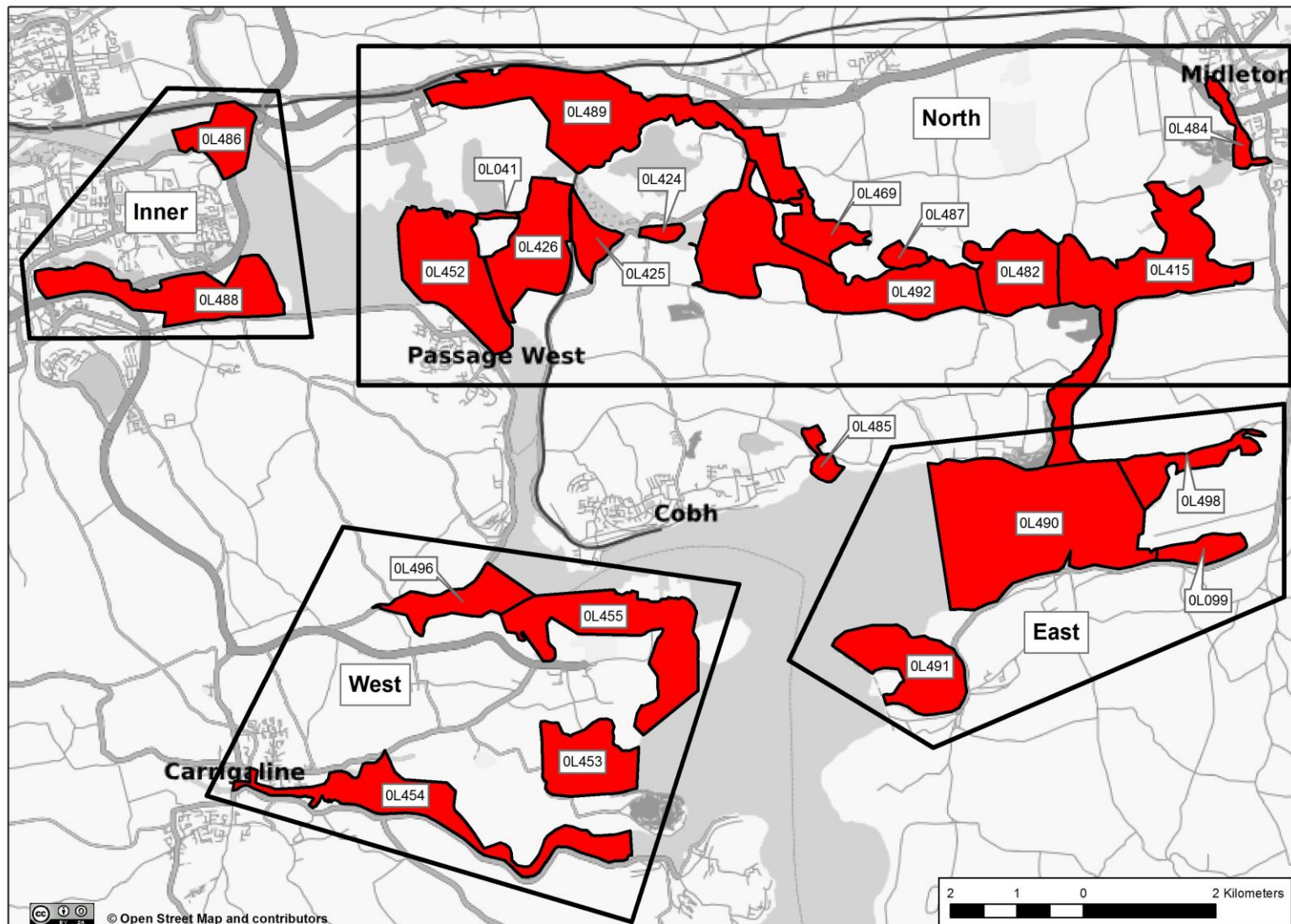


Figure 1. Cork Harbour I-WeBS subsites (note, any subsite amendments submitted with the roost questionnaires are not included)