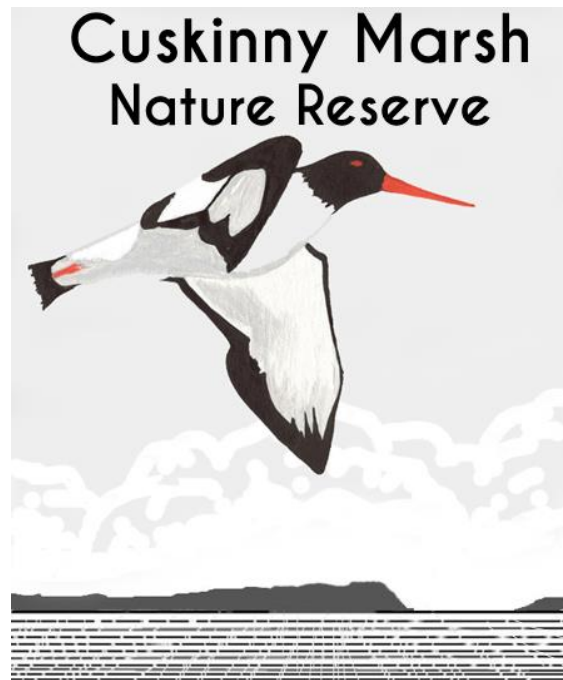


# Cuskinny Nature Reserve

## Wetland and Sea Birds





# **Wetland Bird Identification Guide**

**Identification Plates from:**

**The Birds of Ireland: A Field Guide  
(The Collins Press)**

**<https://www.collinspress.ie/the-birds-of-ireland.html>**

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**(Cover image: Kingfisher by Mark Carmody)**

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## **About this Guide**

This is a guide to the wetland and sea birds you are most likely to see during a visit to Cuskinny Marsh Nature Reserve. Some are winter visitors, some summer visitors and other are here all year round. Over 170 species of birds have been seen on the reserve or out in the bay but unfortunately are not all covered in this introductory guide so always be on the lookout for something new and unusual.

The identification plates should help you to identify the birds you see.

### **Best Time to Visit**

Visit Cuskinny Marsh Nature Reserve at any time of the year as there is always something to see.

### **Opening Times**

Cuskinny Marsh Nature Reserve is run by volunteers and the lands of the reserve are private but you can get great views of the wildlife of the reserve from the road that skirts the edge of it on the south and west side.

**We hope you enjoy your visit.**



## About Cuskinny Marsh Nature Reserve

Cuskinny Nature Reserve, near Cobh, County Cork, Ireland is managed by Birdwatch Ireland (BWI). The land is owned by the Bird and Ronan families and comprises about 12 ha of land located along the lower reaches of the Ballyleary Stream on the Great Island in Cork Harbour.



**IMPORTANT: All the lands on the reserve are private property and therefore the wildlife should be viewed only from the road that borders the west and south side of the reserve. Camping, Horse Riding, Canoeing and any activity that might disturb the wildlife or damage the reserve is not permitted on the reserve and fishing, swimming and boating of any description is not allowed on the lake. The area is so small that these activities would seriously disturb the wild life.**

When visiting the reserve enjoy your stay and please keep to the roadway, parking area or the beach where it is possible to get good views of the wildlife of the reserve.

The welfare of the wildlife of the reserve is your first consideration. The reserve includes a mixture of lake, swamp, grassland and woodland habitats and is of local nature conservation importance. It is also an important local amenity and is used by local schools for educational purposes.

**Thanks to:** Wanda Ronan and Andrew, Heather and David Bird, without whose generosity as landowners the reserve would not exist. Birgit O'Driscoll, Eddie Ronayne, Anna Ahern and Moggy Somers for their help and advice, Cobh Town Council, Cobh Community College, Cork County Council, The Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund and SECAD for their assistance. Thanks also to the teachers and pupils of Scoil Iosaef Naofa and those too numerous to mention who have been giving their time, help and advice since the reserve was established in 1990.

**Contact:** [info@cuskinynaturereserve.com](mailto:info@cuskinynaturereserve.com)

## Abbreviations used in the following species identification profiles

<b>M.</b> - Male	<b>L</b> - Length
<b>F.</b> - Female	<b>WS</b> - Wingspan
<b>Br.</b> - Breeding plumage	<b>AY</b> - Can be seen all year round
<b>NBr.</b> - Non-breeding plumage	<b>Su</b> - Usually seen in summer
<b>Juv.</b> - Juvenile plumage	<b>A</b> - Usually seen in autumn
<b>Im.</b> - Immature plumage	<b>Sp</b> - Usually seen in spring
<b>1st W.</b> - 1st winter plumage	<b>W</b> - Usually seen in winter
<b>1st S.</b> - 1st summer plumage	<b>CB</b> - Common Breeding Species
<b>1st Y.</b> - 1st year plumage	<b>SB</b> - Scarce Breeding Species
<b>2nd W.</b> - 2nd winter plumage	<b>RB</b> - Rare Breeding Species
<b>2nd S.</b> - 2nd summer plumage	<b>NB</b> Non-Breeding Species
<b>3rd W.</b> - 3rd winter plumage	<b>Lagoon*</b> – Best place to look for
<b>3rd S.</b> - 3rd summer plumage	<b>Bay**</b> – Best place to look for
<b>4th W.</b> - 4th winter plumage	

**\* Lagoon – the area often called the lake. A lake is totally freshwater whereas a lagoon is a mix of seawater and freshwater.**

**\*\* Bay – May be seen when looking out into Cork harbour from the Car park and along the seafront.**

## Plumage and 'Bare Part' Terminology

In order to make accurate descriptions of the birds you see, you should get to know the names of the different parts of a bird. Feathers on almost all birds are arranged in groups called feather tracts. These tracts are common to most birds and can vary between species in the number and/or shape of the feathers in each tract. The labelled photographs below show the names of the various parts and tracts of a bird. Look at the photos and labels and try to become familiar with the various names. This will help you when confronted with a bird that you have never seen before and need to describe accurately in order to identify it. Use the species photos in this guide to practise naming the different parts, and don't worry if you can't remember them all; you will get to know them with time.







**Moorhen** | Cearc uisce | *Gallinula chloropus*  
 L 32–35cm WS 50–55cm AY CB Lagoon

Smaller than Mallard; sexes similar. **Adult:** bright red forehead shield; red/yellow beak; dark plumage, apart from some white streaks on flanks and two white patches on undertail; stout legs; large, lobed feet. **Juv/Im:** browner and paler; dull olive-yellow beak; downy young are all black with red/yellow beak. **In flight:** rarely seen in flight; when frightened or in danger, runs along water surface with neck outstretched and wings flapping furiously, making for the nearest cover of reeds or other waterside vegetation. **Voice:** makes many sounds. Usually a loud, harsh krrrek or a fast double-noted ka-kik. (See Coot, Water Railer Rail)



**Coot** | *Cearc cheannann* | *Fulica atra*  
 L 36–40cm WS 70–80cm AY NB Lagoon

Smaller than Mallard; dives; sexes similar: **Adult:** conspicuous white beak and forehead shield; black plumage; dark red eye; large, lobed green-grey feet. **Juv/Im:** paler than adults, especially on the head, neck and breast. Similar to young Moorhen (p. 117) but lacks white on the undertail; downy chicks dark brown with an orange-red head. **In flight:** all dark with narrow, white trailing edge to the secondaries. **Voice:** sounds include a loud short *krouw*, repeated mechanically, with several intermittent brief high-pitched nasal whistles. (See Moorhen)

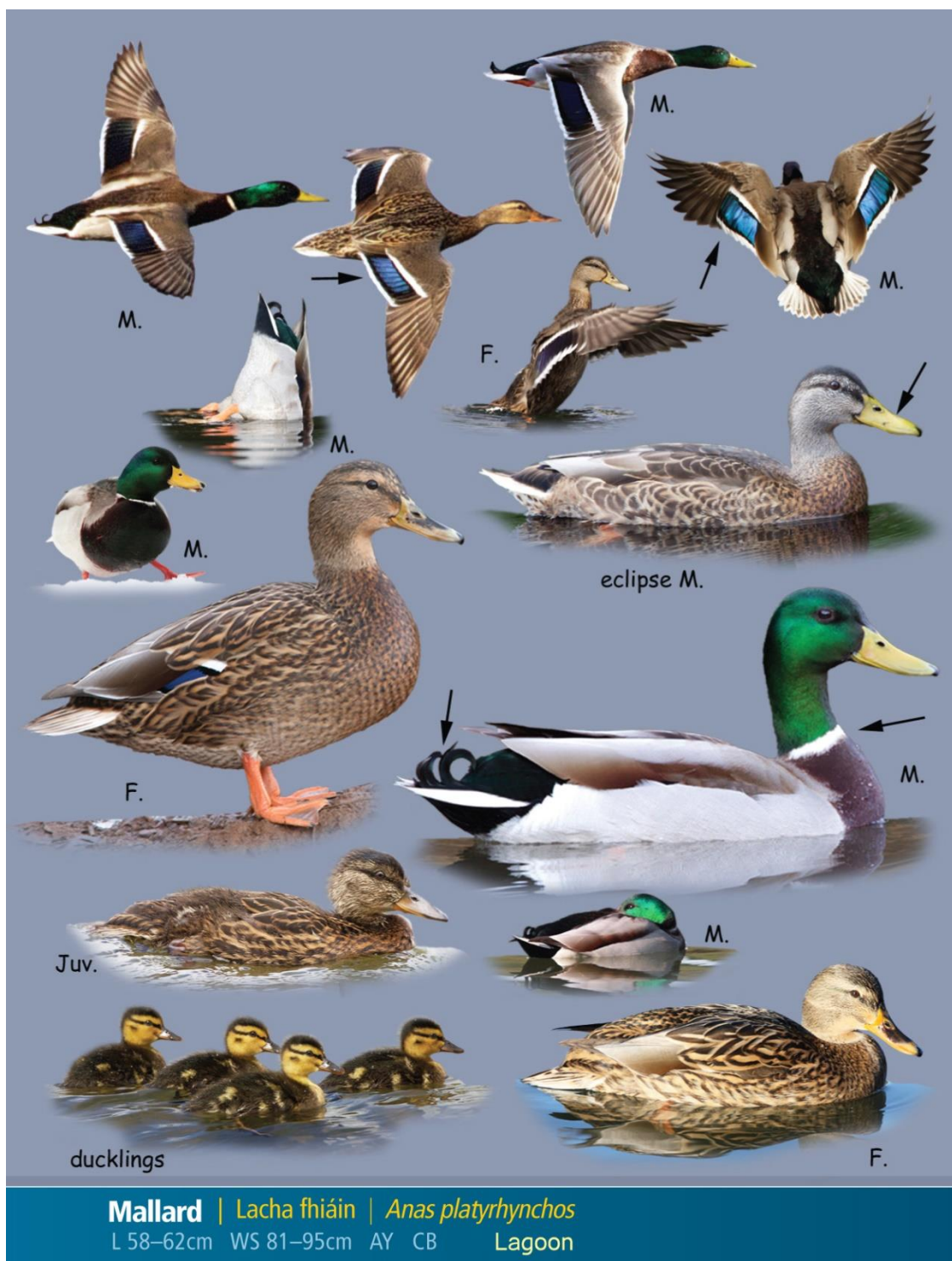




### Water Rail | Ralóg uisce/Traonach uisce | *Rallus aquaticus*

L 22–26cm WS 38–45cm AY CB Lagoon

Slightly smaller than Blackbird; dark red eye; long, thin, slightly downcurved pink-red beak, dark culmen and tip; long legs; large, unwebbed, pale pink feet. **Adult:** upperparts streaked black; brown back/wings; underside dark; grey face/neck/breast; belly/flanks heavily barred black/white; vent buff; undertail coverts white. **Juv/Im:** similar to adult but paler face/breast/belly; shorter dull beak. **In flight:** no obvious markings; legs hang down; usually only flies a short distance if disturbed. **Voice:** the easiest way to identify this secretive bird; loud grunting/squealing pig-like call from a reed bed or other waterside vegetation, mainly at dawn/dusk and at night. (See Moorhen



A big surface feeding duck. **Male:** white neck ring; iridescent green-blue head; yellow beak; up-curved feathers at base of whitish tail. Male in eclipse plumage resembles female except yellow-green beak. **Female:** dull brown; beak reddish-orange and dark brown; lacks curled tail feathers. **In flight:** male – dark head, neck ring, white bordered blue speculum; female – brown; pale-edged tail; white-bordered blue/purple speculum. Rises almost vertically from water. Rapid wingbeats, direct flight. **Voice:** female makes wide variety of calls ranging from *quack* to what sounds like a laugh. Male makes a quiet *whEEP* sound.





Surface feeder; bigger than Mallard; found in estuaries, preferring mudflats. **Adult male:** mainly white body; black head/belly; red beak/pink legs; chestnut breast band – rules out any other duck. **Adult female:** smaller than male, no red knob on base of beak; little black on belly. **1<sup>st</sup> W:** similar shape to adult but is black and white, lacking bright colours. **In flight:** broad, pale chestnut breast band; black 'braces' on white back; black primaries/secondaries. **Voice:** usually vocal only during breeding season, including rapid guttural, laughing *agh-agh-agh-agh* lasting several seconds. Also high, liquid *tiew-tiew* with high whistle.



### Teal | Praschlach | *Anas crecca*

L 34–38cm WS 58–64cm A/W/Sp NB Lagoon

Our smallest surface feeder; much smaller than Mallard. **Male:** chestnut head/neck; dark green eyepatch with thin buff edging extending down side of neck; pale yellow undertail outlined in black, horizontal white line above closed wing; in eclipse plumage resembles female. **Female:** scaly grey-brown; green speculum; short, pale, horizontal line under tail. **1<sup>st</sup> W:** similar to female. **In flight:** green speculum; pale wing bar; rises quickly when disturbed, rapid wingbeats, plain appearance. **Voice:** in winter, can be very noisy. Male makes a short high-pitched *krreet*; female makes much higher *quack*.





Swans, Geese and Ducks | 47



Surface feeder; smaller than Mallard; short/black-tipped blue-grey beak; short grey legs. **Male:** dark red-brown head; conspicuous creamy forehead/crown. Mainly grey body; grey-pink breast; grey flanks; white belly; white patch at rear of flanks; black undertail coverts/vent. Male in eclipse plumage resembles female but retains white wing patches. **Female:** duller grey-brown with pale belly. **In flight:** white wing patches (male); both male/female have dark green speculum, unmarked pale underwing. Rises quickly when taking to air. **Voice:** male utters distinctive high-pitched whistling feeoow which can be heard at some distance; female makes lower guttural sound.





Small diving duck, noticeably smaller than Mallard. **Male:** long tuft of black feathers sticking out of back of the head; all black with white belly/flanks; purple-blue sheen on black feathers visible at close range; light blue-grey beak, black tip; bright golden-yellow eye. **Female:** short, blunt tuft, dark brown; pale belly; varying degrees of paleness around base of beak. **1<sup>st</sup> W:** similar to female but tuft almost absent. **In flight:** fast, straight; broad white wing bar, white belly/underwing. **Voice:** usually silent; in courtship male makes quiet whistling sound. Female makes growling sound.



**Red-breasted Merganser** | Síolta rua | *Mergus serrator*  
 L 53–57cm WS 70–80cm A/W/Sp NB Bay

Diving duck; slightly smaller than a Mallard; long, thin red beak; red legs; red eye. **Male:** long, spiky feathers sticking out of the back of its dark green head; white neck; dark-streaked pale chestnut breast; variable amounts of white visible on the closed wing. **Female:** pale reddish-brown head, light shaggy crest; red-brown on back of the neck fading to pale grey on the front, grey-brown body. **In flight:** fast and straight with rapid wingbeats; large, white inner-wing patches on the male, smaller on the female; stretched neck appearance. **Voice:** usually silent.





Very big. **Adult:** all white, occasionally stained pink/brown in parts; orange and black beak with black knob (bigger on male); on ground/swimming, note curved neck. **Juv:** cygnet downy grey with all-dark beak; **1<sup>st</sup> W:** pink-and-black beak with little or no knob; pale grey-brown plumage turning white towards end of winter/beginning of spring. **In flight:** long neck held straight out; the wings make a buzzing sound; on take-off, runs along the surface of water with powerful wingbeats. **Voice:** greeting call is a soft wheezing *whe-aarrrr*, also lower coughing sounds.



Smaller than farmyard goose; legs/short beak black. **Adult:** black head/neck/breast; white 'gill' marks on side of neck; upperparts dark grey-brown; white tail with narrow black edge; undertail white; belly light grey-brown. **1<sup>st</sup>W:** similar to adult; less obvious white neck marks; white edges to wing feathers, narrow white wing bars. **In flight:** looks all dark except white on tail/under-tail – very noticeable. Fast wingbeats; usually flies in long, loose lines or bunched groups, often low over water. **Voice:** In flocks a muted, guttural quivering *grrough*/often silent on own.





Diving bird; bigger than Mallard; sexes similar; strong, grey, hook-tipped beak; large webbed feet; thick snake-like neck; swims low in water/slightly raised beak; jumps up and out as it dives. **Adult:** all black; breeding plumage, white 'diamond' on thigh; orange/white throat patch. **1<sup>st</sup> W:** pale belly/throat. **In flight:** runs along water surface to take off; shallow, rapid wingbeats with intermittent glides; neck slightly bent; low over water or very high on its own or in group travelling in lines or Vs. Usually skis along water when landing. **Voice:** usually silent. (See Shag, Great Northern Diver)



Diving bird; smaller, less robust version of the Cormorant; sexes similar; long, slim beak; short, stout, dark webbed feet; slim neck and head, more obvious forehead. **Br**: distinctive forward-curling dark crown tufts, all-dark iridescent plumage and thin yellow patch below the eye. **NBr**: loses its tufts and the yellow patch gets dull. **I<sup>st</sup>W**: unlike the Cormorant, is grey-brown rather than white/grey-white below. **In flight**: no obvious markings; direct flight, usually low over water; thin, straight neck. **Voice**: usually silent. (See Cormorant, Great Northern Diver, Red-throated Diver)





Smaller than Mallard; sexes similar; dives. **Br**: unmistakable in breeding plumage; long, thin neck/striking head pattern with large chestnut/black tufts. **NBr**: straight, pink, dagger-shaped beak; thin, dark line between the eye and base of bill; dark crown; white face/neck/underside; dark grey-brown flanks. **Juv/I<sup>st</sup> W**: very young birds have black-and-white-striped head/neck; stripes disappear by early winter. **In flight**: looks long-bodied; large white patches on inner half of wings; very fast wingbeats; outstretched, slightly drooping neck; feet project beyond short tail. **Voice**: usually silent. Display call is a guttural *krree-krree*, also a higher *aaah-aaah*.



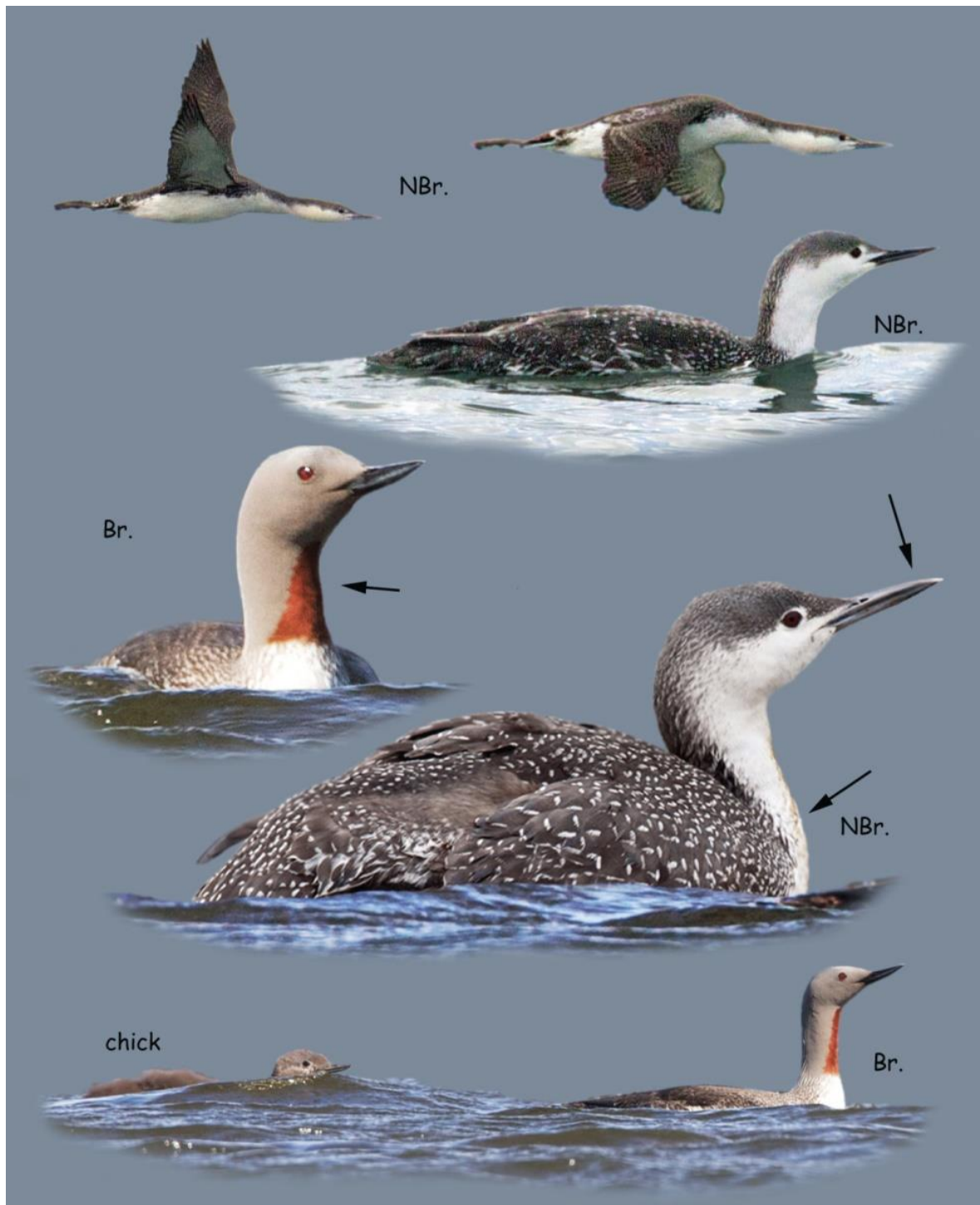
**Little Grebe** | Spágaire tonn | *Tachybaptus ruficollis*  
 L 25–29cm WS 40–45cm AY CB Lagoon

Small diving bird, much smaller than Mallard; short, dark beak in Br plumage/ pale in NBr plumage with dark culmen; dark, lobed feet set far back on body. From a distance looks dark in colour; characteristic shape with a blunt fluffy rear end; buoyant appearance. **Br:** chestnut neck/ear coverts; creamy spot at base of short beak. **NBr:** pale throat; light brown neck/breast/flanks. **In flight:** all-dark upperparts. When disturbed will run along water surface with wings fluttering, into cover. Flight is fast/straight. **Voice:** call is a high, loud, long and whinnying trill. Chicks will often ride on the back of parent.





Cormorant-sized. Told from swimming Cormorant/Red-throated Diver by thicker beak held horizontally. **NBr**: dagger-shaped, light-grey beak, dark tip/culmen; noticeable forehead/flat crown; pale around eye; dark upperparts; white underside; indistinct dark half-collar; short tail. **Br**: black and white spotting on back; thin white stripes on side neck forming incomplete collar: **1<sup>st</sup> W**: pale-edged (scaly) back/wing feathers; looks paler than adult at distance. **In flight**: dark/unmarked upperparts, white underside; white underwing with dark trailing edge; looks dark-headed from distance; feet project well beyond short tail. **Voice**: usually silent outside breeding season. (See Cormorant, Shag, Red-throated Diver )



### Red-throated Diver | Lóma rua | *Gavia stellate*

L 58–64cm WS 100–110cm A/W/Sp NB Bay

Mallard-sized; smaller than Great Northern Diver; p. 70; sexes similar; up-tilted, thin, dagger-shaped beak. **NBr.** pale-headed from distance; no obvious forehead; pale grey crown/nape, white in front of eye; cheeks/underside white; back/wings dark grey with pale flecks; no obvious tail. **Br.** red throat patch; grey face/side of neck; unpatterned dark grey-brown upperparts. **In flight:** direct flight; rapid wingbeats; dark/unmarked upperparts, white underside/white underwing with dark trailing edge. Legs project well beyond short tail. **Voice:** Usually silent; during breeding season, loud, eerie, plaintive song/calls. (See Great Northern Diver, Shag, Cormorant) Cormorant





**Black Guillemot** | *Foracha dhubh* | *Cepphus grylle*  
 L 31–35cm WS 54–56cm A/W/Sp NB Bay

Size of a Jackdaw; sexes similar; sits low on the water: **Br**: all dark with large, oval, white wing patches, bright red legs, short, pointed beak, red gape; white lining to the underwing. Birds in their first summer look almost entirely black with small patches of white on the wing. **NBr**: head and back looks pale, white wing patches, dark flecked on 1<sup>st</sup> W birds. **In flight**: direct flight; rapid wingbeats, usually low over the water; white wing patches very obvious and also white rump in winter.



**Guillemot** | Muiréan | *Uria aalga*  
 L 38–45cm WS 64–73cm A/W/Sp NB Bay

Rook-sized; sexes similar; slim, dagger-shaped, all-dark beak; very short black legs set far back on body; webbed feet; dives to hunt. **Br**: head/upperparts chocolate-brown; white underside, white secondary stripe visible on closed wing. Some have white eye ring/line from rear of eye ('bridled' form). **NBr**: throat/side of face white; long, downcurving, narrow black stripe extends back from eye. **1<sup>st</sup> W**: shorter beak, less streaked flanks. **In flight**: direct/rapid wingbeats; chocolate-brown and white upperparts, sharp beak; feet projecting beyond tail. **Voice**: very noisy at breeding colonies; slightly muted, drawn-out *ooqarrrrr* easily heard above din of other breeding seabirds.





Our largest seabird; plunge-dives from a height with sweptback wings when hunting. **Adult:** unmistakable; brilliant white plumage, long wings, black wing tips; pointed tail; head yellow, though not always noticeable at a distance; large, conical beak. **Juv/lm:** dark brown with pale spots and streaks, gradually becoming whiter as it reaches adulthood, usually taking four to six years. **In flight:** when not feeding, gannets often fly in V-formation or in single file just above the waves. Glides and soars in strong wind. **Voice:** at the breeding colony, a rapidly repeated guttural *dirraaw-dirraaw-dirraaw*, varying slightly in pitch, forming a continuous chorus.



Jackdaw-sized. **Adult Br:** dark chocolate-brown head; white underside; pale grey back/wings, dark red beak/legs. **Adult NBr:** dark spot behind eye; two dark smudge-lines on head; legs/base of beak paler. **1<sup>st</sup> Y:** dark brown/black on wings; thin black tail band; orange-yellow legs; pale brown-yellow beak/black tip. **In flight:** adult: pale grey back/wings; white leading edge to outer primaries forming white triangle (above and below) with black trailing edge. **1<sup>st</sup> Y:** reduced white on outer primaries; dark trailing edge to secondaries; brown wing coverts; black tail band. **Voice:** noisy, high-pitched call; includes thin-sounding, drawn-out *kaaww*; also softer chatter. (Mediterranean Gull Little Gull)





**Mediterranean Gull** | Sléibhín Meánmhuirí | *Larus melanocephalus*  
 L 37–39cm WS 94–98cm A/W/Sp NB Lagoon/Bay

Black-headed Gull sized. **Adult Br:** jet-black hood, broken white eye ring; pale grey back/wings, white towards tips; no black body plumage; stout red beak with yellow tip; long red legs. **Adult NBr:** variable dark streaks from behind eye across top of head. **Juv/Im:** more black/grey than young Black-headed Gulls. **1<sup>st</sup> W:** dark legs/beak; thin black tail band. **2<sup>nd</sup> Y:** looks like adult, has thin black markings on white primaries. **In flight:** adults have no black on wings; **2<sup>nd</sup> Y** has thin black lines on primaries; **1<sup>st</sup> W** looks black, white and grey. (See Black-headed Gull, Little Gull, Gull)





Bigger than Black-headed Gull. **Adult:** pale grey back/wings; black-and-white wing tips; pink legs; stout yellow beak/red spot; yellow iris. **NBr:** head/neck mottled grey-brown. **Juv/Im:** complex patterns of black/brown/white; dark outer primaries; initially black beak/dark iris/black tail band. Grey-backed in 2<sup>nd</sup> W; adult plumage in fourth year. **In flight:** light blue-grey back/upper wings; black-and-white wing tips, thin white trailing edge. Im: pale inner primaries/solid dark tail band; varying amounts of brown on body/wings, dark wing tips on 1<sup>st</sup> Y. **Voice:** includes loud, repeated *kuwaa*/laugh-like *agah-ga-ga*. (See Common Gull, young Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull)



Black-headed Gull sized. **Adult:** grey back/wings with white trailing edge, black wing tips with large white spots; dull yellow beak; legs yellow-green to grey. **NBr:** streaking on head; beak grey at base with some black near tip. **Juv/Im:** adult plumage in three years. **1<sup>st</sup> Y:** grey back; no obvious white on wings; white tail; black tail band; black-tipped pink bill, grey-pink legs. **2<sup>nd</sup> Y** like non-breeding adult; less white/more black on wing tips; thicker black band on beak. **In flight:** noticeable white wing tips on adult. **Voice:** very squeaky. (See Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull Kittiwake)





Black-headed Gull sized. **Adult:** yellow beak; dark eye; short dark legs; grey back/wings; black wing tips. NBr: grey nape/dark smudge behind eye. **Juv/Im:** black half collar at base of neck, fades in 1<sup>st</sup> Y; black smudge behind eye; black beak, turns yellow with age; some black on wings; black-tipped tail. Reaches adult plumage after three years. **In flight:** adult has grey back/inner wing, paler towards primaries/'dipped in ink' black tips; Juv/Im: black 'M' pattern on wings; buoyant agile flight. **Voice:** a loud sound like 'kittiwaakke', often repeated. Usually silent outside breeding season. (See Common Gull, Sabine's Gull, Gull, Little Gull)





Largest Irish gull, much bigger than Black-headed Gull. **Adult:** black back/wings; white wing tips; flesh-pink legs; heavy yellow beak with red spot. **Juv/Im:** plumage initially a complex pattern of black/brown/white showing more contrast than on other young large gulls. As it matures, back turns black first ('saddle-back' appearance). **In flight:** black back; broad black wings with a white trailing/leading edge; white wing tips; strong agile flight. Young birds: pale inner primaries/indistinct dark tail band visible in flight. **Voice:** deep calls, including a short *ouawk*. (See young Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls)



Ring-billed Gull (Ad.)



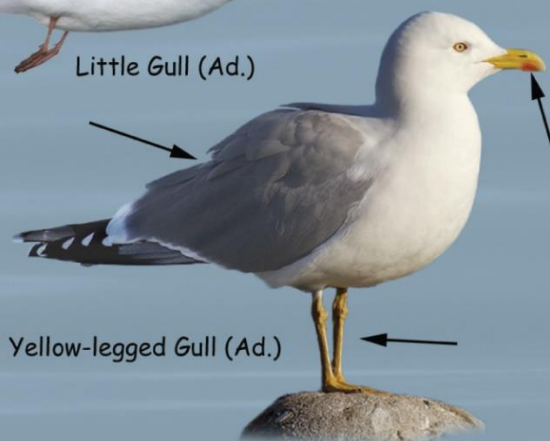
Sabine's Gull (Ad.)



Little Gull (Ad.)



Little Gull (1st W.)



Yellow-legged Gull (Ad.)



Noticeably smaller than Great Black-backed Gull. **Adult:** dark grey back/wings with white wing tips; yellow-ochre legs; yellow beak with red spot. **Juv./Im:** starts out with complex patterns of black/brown/white; looks darker overall than other young gulls; all dark primaries/secondaries; pink legs/dark beak on young birds; gradually reaches adult plumage after four years. **In flight:** dark grey back/wings, white trailing edge with black on outer primaries with white wing tips; solid dark tail band on younger birds. (See Great Black-backed Gull, young Herring Gull Gull)



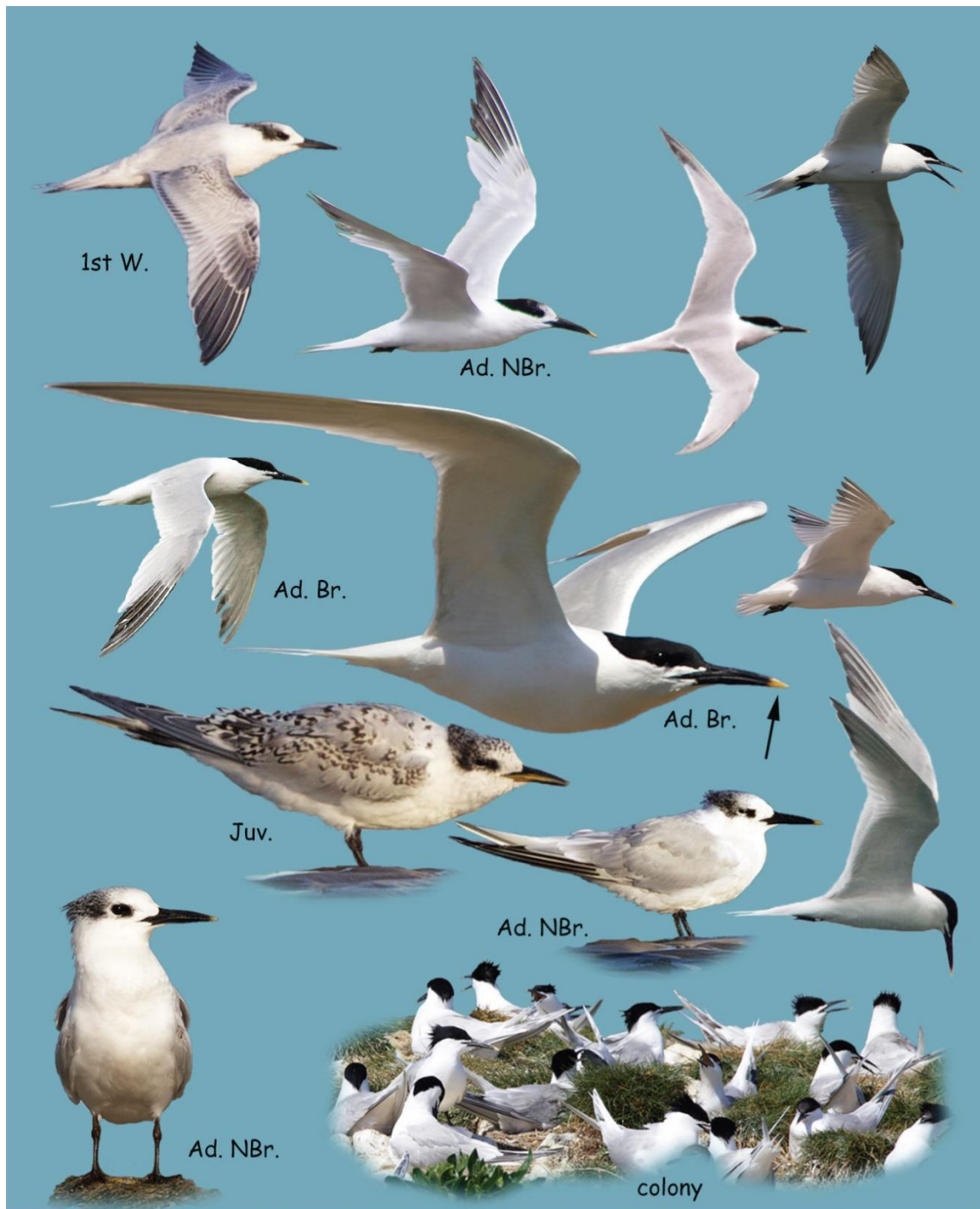
# Young Gulls





Smaller than Black-headed Gull; plunge-dives. **Br**: dark-tipped red beak; black crown/nape; long, slim, pointed wings, dark grey on outer primaries; long, deeply forked tail; short red legs. Wing tips usually project beyond the tip of tail. **NBr**: white forehead, black beak. **Juv/Im**: variable amounts of ginger-brown on back/wings; plain grey primaries; dark secondary bar; pale forehead; darker beak with orange base. **In flight**: from below translucent trailing edge to inner primaries. **Voice**: very vocal at breeding colony; loud, high-pitched, screeching calls. (See **Sandwich Tern**)





**Sandwich Tern** | Geabhróg scothdhubh | *Sterna sandvicensis*  
 L 38–42cm WS 100cm Sp/Su/A NB Bay

About the size of Black-headed Gull; long, dark beak with pale yellow tip, short black legs. **Br**: black crown and nape, shaggy crest usually only visible when on the ground, forked tail. **NBr**: pale forehead and front half of the crown. **Juv/Im**: no yellow tip to the beak; varying amounts of dark-tipped and dark-edged feathers on the wings and back. **In flight**: when hunting, flies with beak pointing down; large, pale-looking tern with dark grey outer primaries. **Voice**: distinctive, loud, high-pitched, grating call. (See Common Tern)





**Grey Heron** | **Corr éisc** | *Ardea cinerea*  
 L 90–96cm WS 150–173cm AY B Lagoon/Bay

Our tallest bird; large dagger-shaped beak. **Adult:** pale grey head; thick black stripe from eye to back of head; long neck; grey body; long legs. **Br:** long, thin feathers on neck/breast; two long black feathers from back of head; beak changes colour from dull yellow-orange to bright pink (NBr to Br). **Im:** greyer plumage, duller beak. **In flight:** bowed wings, slow wingbeats; neck tucked in/legs trailing beyond short tail. Wings/back grey with darker primaries/secondaries. Young birds not as clearly marked. **Voice:** loud *fraank* call. Sounds of adults/young at nest, day/night, are like a fairy-tale monster or someone getting sick!



Smaller and slimmer than the much larger Grey Heron and a bit bigger than a Curlew; sexes similar. **All ages:** yellow feet; long, thin, dark, dagger-shaped beak; all-white plumage. **Br:** develops long, thin, white feathers from the back of the head and lace-like feathers on the breast and back. **In flight:** flies slowly with bowed wings with neck tucked up and yellow feet visible on dark legs trailing beyond its short tail. **Voice:** usually silent but will make squawking noises when fighting or at the nest.





### Kingfisher | Cruidín | *Alcedo atthis*

L 16–18cm WS 24–26cm A/W/Sp NB Lagoon

Smaller than a Starling; sexes similar: **All ages:** metallic, pale blue back; orange breast and belly; white neck patch; short, rounded sky-blue wings with white spots on the inner half; dagger-shaped beak; very short pink-red legs. The male has an all-dark beak and female has orange-red towards the base of the lower mandible. **In flight:** like a blue flash; low, straight, buzzing flight with occasional gliding; dives from branches and other perches over water; can be seen on the coast in winter. **Voice:** its call is a very loud, piercing pseeeee, often repeated several times, usually in flight.





A bit bigger than Rook; sexes similar. **Adult:** black and white with long, straight, orange-red beak; fairly long, pink legs; white half collar in NBr plumage. **Juv/Im:** a dark tip to the beak, white half collar on 1<sup>st</sup> S. **In flight:** long, straight, orange-red beak, black-and-white body and wings. **Voice:** a very loud, single-noted piping call, repeated often and sometimes speeding up at the end. Sometimes several birds form a loose circle, calling with necks stretched outward and upward, and beaks pointing towards the ground.



**Redshank** | *Cosdeargán* | *Tringa tetanus*  
 L 27–29cm WS 45–52cm A/W/Sp NB Bay

Smaller than Oystercatcher; sexes similar; long, orange-red legs; medium-sized, straight, dark beak with red base. **NBr:** plain, dark grey-brown upperparts; pale grey-brown on neck/breast; white on belly/undertail. **Br:** heavily streaked on neck/breast/flanks and dark spots on wings/back. **Juv/Im:** more vividly marked than NBr adults; yellow-orange legs. **In flight:** triangular white patch on back and broad white trailing edge to most of wing. White tail with dark bars, feet project a little beyond the tail. **Voice:** very noisy when disturbed; utters a loud, harsh, repeated *tieuu-ieuu*. In the breeding season it makes a monotonous, repeating *tiew-tiew-tiew* sound.





Size of Starling; sexes similar; low profile when on ground; short, orange legs; dark, stubby, pointed beak; often reluctant to fly, preferring to walk or run away; rarely seen alone. **NBr:** dark grey-brown upperparts/breast patches, white belly. **Br:** distinctive black-and-white head/breast; complex orange/brown/black back pattern. **Juv/Im:** similar to NBr but pale edges to wing/back. **In flight:** upperparts form a striking pattern of browns/black/white. Flies fast/straight, usually low over water. **Voice:** calls in flight/on ground; variable but include rapidly repeated *tuck-tuck-tuck* often rising in pitch/speed towards end. Lower piping notes also heard.





### Curlew | Crotach | *Numenius arquata*

L 50–60cm WS 80–100cm A/W/Sp NB Bay

Smaller than Great Black-backed Gull; sexes similar; very long, downcurved beak, longer on females; long, blue-grey legs. Usually lacks crown stripes (cf. Whimbrel). **Adult:** brown body and wings with dark streaks and spots; no obvious body or wing markings. **Juv/Im:** finer streaking on the sides of breast and shorter straighter beak. **In flight:** long, curved beak, unmarked wings, triangular pale rump patch, barred tail. **Voice:** can be very noisy, especially when disturbed. A loud *curr-lee* and a bubbly trill are its most characteristic calls. (See Whimbrel)



**Whimbrel** | **Crotach eanaigh** | *Numenius phaeopus*

L 38–42cm WS 80–84cm A/W/Sp NB Bay

Smaller than Curlew; sexes similar; looks like a Curlew but with a shorter, curved beak and a noticeable pale median crown stripe and dark lateral crown stripes. **In flight:** relatively short beak, colour and pattern from above similar to Curlew but looks darker on the outer wing, triangular white rump patch, barred tail. **Voice:** distinctive call; a fairly high-pitched, flute-like note repeated several times in quick succession. (See Curlew)





Bit bigger than Starling; sexes similar; long, straight, dark, downward-pointing beak; stout, dark legs; big feet. **All ages:** black/buff head stripes; body a complex combination of light/dark-brown, black, buff, white; barred flanks; pale belly. **In flight:** will take off at speed in zig-zag flight pattern, then straight line once high off ground; looks dull in bad light. **Voice:** makes short, harsh, rasping call, often repeated. Song is loud, repetitive *tchic-ca*, like rotating squeaky wheel. During display flight, will fly from a height towards ground with its tail fully spread, making rapid, repetitive, bleating sound.





**Common Sandpiper** | Gobadán | *Actitis hypoleucos*

L 18–20cm WS 35–40cm A/W/Sp NB Bay

Starling-sized; sexes similar; often bobs its tail; long, straight, dark-tipped grey beak; dark eye; white eye ring; long yellow-green legs; grey-brown smudge on side of breast; white belly/undertail; grey-brown upperparts; white outer-tail feathers barred black. **Br**: fine, dark-brown flecks on head/breast/back/rump. **NBr**: duller plumage. **Juv/Im**: similar to adult but pale tips/edges to feathers (scaly appearance). **In flight**: distinctive; dark upper wings with white stripe; often flying low over water; bursts of fluttering, stiff wingbeats interspersed with short glides, wings rarely lifted above body. **Voice**: loud, high-pitched *Tu-wee hee hee*/long high-pitched whistles usually heard in flight when disturbed.



### Hooded Crow | Feannóg | *Corvus corone*

L 47cm WS 97–99cm AY CB Farmland/Estuary/Coast

About the same size as a Rook; strong, straight, black beak; dark legs. **Adult:** black hood covering head, neck and breast, where it forms a rough-edged bib; rest of the body pale grey-brown; wings and tail black. **Juv/Im:** similar to adult but brown wash to the back and head feathers and less distinct bib. **In flight:** obvious pale back and belly. Some individuals can have unusual, broad, pale wing stripes. **Voice:** call is usually a loud hoarse *kr-aaa-kr-aaa-kr-aaa*. Some Hooded Crows spend a lot of time hunting on the seashore.





Male slightly smaller than Rook and female slightly bigger; sexes similar. **Adult:** slate-grey upperparts; finely barred underside, pale upper breast and throat, dark 'teardrop' below eye. **Juv/Im:** dark brown upperparts, heavily streaked dark brown underside, dark 'teardrop' below eye. **In flight:** look for head pattern, pointed wings, stiff-winged flight. 'Stoops' by closing the wings and descending at great speed to catch prey. **Voice:** includes a high, irritating, squeaking *kaw-kik-kaw-tieu*. Alarm call is a high, drawn-out *kwaugh* cry repeated with variable pitch.



# Checklist of the Birds of Cuskinny Nature Reserve

(List compiled from records from Cuskinny starting in the mid-1970s)

## Key

**Status:** C=Common, UN=Uncommon, Sc=Scarce, R=Rare

**Best Time:** AY=All Year, Sp=Spring, Su=Summer, A=Autumn, W=Winter.

**Breeding Status:** N=Non-Breeding, B=Breeding, RB=Rare Breeding,  
FB=Feral Breeding, EB=Formerly Bred.

Species	Scientific Name	Status	Best Time	Breeding
<b>GEESE, SWANS &amp; DUCKS</b>				
Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	UC	W,S	N
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	F	AY	N
Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	R	W	N
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	F	W	N
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	C	AY	B
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	C	W,S	B
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	UC	W,S	N
Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	C	W	N
American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>	R	W	N
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	C	AY	B
Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	R	W	N
Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	R	W	N
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	C	W,S	N
Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas carolinensis</i>	R	W	N
Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	R	W	N
Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>	R	W	N
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	UC	W	N
Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	R	W,S	N
Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	R	W	N
Velvet Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>	R	W	N
Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	R	W	N
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	R	W,S	N
Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	R	W,S	N
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	Sc	W,S	N

DIVERS				
Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	Sc	W,S	N
Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	R	W	N
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Sc	W	N
White-billed Diver	<i>Gavia adamsii</i>	R	W	N

PETRELS & SHEARWATERS				
Leach's Storm-petrel	<i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	R	W	N
Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Sc	S,Su,A	N
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	R	A	N

GREBES				
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	C	AY	B
Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	R	W	N
Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	R	W,S	N
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Sc	W,S	N
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	R	W	N

IBISES & HERONS				
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	R	Sp,A,W	N
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	R	Sp	N
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	C	AY	B
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	UC	A,W,S	N

GANNETS				
Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	Sc	Su,A,W	N

SHAGS & CORMORANTS				
Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	C	AY	N
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	C	AY	N

BIRDS OF PREY				
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	R	S,Su,A	N
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	UC	AY	B
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	R	A	N
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	C	AY	N
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	UC	AY	N
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Sc	S,A,W	N
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	UC	S,A,W	N
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	R	AY	N
Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>	R	AY	N



<b>PHEASANTS &amp; RAILS</b>				
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	C	AY	B
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	UC	AY	B
Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>	R	S,Su	EB
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	C	AY	B
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	UC	AY	RB

<b>WADERS</b>				
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	C	A,W,S	N
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	R	W	N
Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	R	W	N
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	R	A,W,S	N
Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	R	W	N
Jack Snipe	<i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>	R	W,S	N
Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	C	W	N
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>	R	A,W,S	N
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	R	W	N
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	C	S	N
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	UC	W	N
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	R	A	N
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	C	A,W,S	N
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Sc	A,W,S	N
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	R	A	N
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	R	A	N
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	UC	A,W,S	N
Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	C	A,W,S	N
Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	R	W,S	N
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	R	A,W,S	N
Grey Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	R	Su,A	N
<b>GULLS</b>				
Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Sc	A,W,S	N
Sabine's Gull	<i>Xemi sabini</i>	R	A	N
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	C	A,W,S	N
Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>	R	A,W	N
Laughing Gull	<i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>	R	W	N
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyiaetus melanocephalus</i>	UC	W,S	N
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	C	W	N
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	R	W,S	N
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	C	A,W,S	N
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	Sc	W,S	N
Iceland Gull	<i>Larus glaucoides</i>	Sc	W,S	N
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	C	A,W,S	N

American Herring Gull	<i>Larus smithsonianus</i>			
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	R	W	N
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	C	A,W,S	N

TERNS				
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	C	S,Su,A	N
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	R	S,Su,A	N
Roseate Tern	<i>Sterna dougallii</i>	R	S,Su,A	N
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	C	S,Su,A	N
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	R	S,Su,A	N
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	R	Su,A	N
Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	R	A	N
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	R	S,Su,A	N

AUKS				
Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	Sc	A,W,S	N
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	Sc	A,W,S	N
Black Guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>	UC	A,W,S	N
Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	R	Su,A	N

PIGEONS & DOVES				
Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Sc	AY	N
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	UC	AY	N
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	C	AY	B
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	R	Sp,A	N
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	UC	AY	B

CUCKOOS, SWIFTS & KINGFISHERS				
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	R	S,Su,A	N
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	C	Su,A	N
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	UC	AY	Possible B

CROWS				
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	UC	AY	Possible B
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	C	AY	B
Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	R	AY	N
Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	C	AY	B
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	C	AY	B
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	R	W	N
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	C	AY	B
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	UC	AY	Past B

WAXWINGS				
Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	R	W	N

TITS & LARKS				
Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	C	AY	B
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	C	AY	B
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	C	AY	B
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	R	AY	N

MARTINS & SWALLOWS				
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Sc	S,Su,A	N
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	C	S,Su,A	N
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	C	S,Su,A	N

LONG-TAILED TITS				
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	C	A,W,S	B

WARBLERS				
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	C	S,Su,A	B
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	C	S,Su,A	B
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	UC	Su,A	B
Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	R	Su,A	N
Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>	R	Sp	N
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	C	AY	B
Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Sc	S,Su,A	B

GOLDCRESTS & WRENS				
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	C	AY	B
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	C	AY	B

TREECREEPERS				
Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	UC	AY	B

STARLINGS				
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	C	AY	B



THRUSHES & ALLIES				
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	C	AY	B
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Sc	W	N
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	UC	W	N
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	C	AY	B
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	UC	AY	UB
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	R	Su,A	N
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	C	AY	B
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	R	A,W	N
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	UC	AY	B
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	R	S,Su,A	N

SPARROWS				
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	C	AY	B
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	R	W	N

ACCENTORS				
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	C	AY	B

WAGTAILS & PIPITS				
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Sc	AY	N
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	C	AY	N
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Sc	AY	N
Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	R	Sp,A	N
Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	C	AY	B

FINCHES				
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	C	AY	B
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	R	W	N
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	UC	AY	B
Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	C	AY	B
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	UC	AY	N
Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>	UC	W	N
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	C	AY	B
Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	UC	W	N

BUNTINGS				
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	R	AY	N
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Sc	AY	B

Distinctive Races				
Kumliens Gull	<i>Larus glaucoides kumlieni</i>	R	W	N
Siberian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus c. tristis</i>	R	W	N

**For more information on Cuskinny Marsh  
Nature Reserve and its wildlife visit**

**[www.cuskinnynaturereserve.com](http://www.cuskinnynaturereserve.com)**

**For more information on birds in county Cork  
and the Cork Branch of Birdwatch Ireland  
check out**

**[www.birdwatchcork.com](http://www.birdwatchcork.com)**