WINTER WILDFOWL CENSUS

Last updated April 2014

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Since 2000, we have been carrying out monthly counts of the wildfowl and waterbirds of Lough Carra each winter, between the months of September and March, as part of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey ("IWeBS" - coordinated by Birdwatch Ireland). The following reports summarise the counts and points of interest for each winter since 2000-2001.



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2000 – 2001

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2000 - 2001. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWEBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas. The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measure might be needed.

The counts on Lough Carra were conducted from several shore sites, and the co-operation of the landowners is gratefully acknowledged.

It is important to note that the numbers recorded are counts of those birds seen, so that some species (such as water rail and moorhen) that are difficult to see are "under-recorded". However, since the counts are made from the same sites each month, by the same people, in similar conditions (when possible), the numbers counted will indicate any significant changes.

The monthly count in October was missed because we had other commitments, and that in March was missed as a result of the foot and mouth disease restrictions.

The counts have shown the following points of interest:-

Little grebe – although numbers were quite high in autumn, there were fewer in winter, suggesting that most of them move on in the hard weather.

Great crested grebe – although these birds breed on the lough, the low numbers recorded indicate that most of the resident birds probably move elsewhere in winter.

Grey heron – only one was seen, on just one occasion.

Gadwall – this species has been increasing its range over recent years, and there seems to be a very healthy resident population on the lough. They were seen mostly at Moorehall and Kilkeeran. Since they tend to live in and near the reedbeds, the low number recorded in December was probably due to their being out of sight at the time of the count.

Teal – in the 1960s and 1970s, winter counts often recorded up to 500, especially in January. Our maximum count of 31 suggests that there has been a substantial drop in numbers of this species visiting the lough.

Mallard – a maximum count of 202 (in January), suggests that the population has suffered catastrophic declines over the last few decades. In the 1960s and 1970s, the wintering numbers regularly topped 1,500, and over 2,000 were sometimes recorded. While we know of no hard evidence of the cause of this decline, it seems possible that the effect of mink on the mallard breeding population is important.

Moorhen – it is amazing that the lough has so few moorhens. It seems very likely that this is due to the presence of mink. Elsewhere, moorhen populations have been observed to crash when mink appear.

IWEBS (Irish Wet	land Bi	rd Sur	/ey) - L	ough Ca	arra 200	00/2001	
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Litttle Grebe	17		13	6	3	5	
Great Crested Grebe					1	2	
Cormorant	5		12	14	7	3	
Grey Heron	1						
Mute Swan	7		5	4	7	5	
Wigeon				27	106	4	
Gadwall	33		44	11	34	78	
Teal	1				14	31	
Mallard	16		80	171	202	40	
Shoveler			4	2	10		
Pochard					190		
Tufted Duck	11		83	141	212	89	
Golden eye			18	45	96	79	
Red breasted Merganser	4		5	1	9	3	
Water Rail					1		
Moorhen	2		1	3	7	3	
Coot	4		1		5	12	
Golden Plover			524				
Lapwing	207		150	40			
Snipe			4		1	2	
Curlew	21		33	21	43	25	
Black-headed Gull	1						
Lesser Black-backed Gull	3						
Peregrine Falcon			1				
Kestrel			1				
Sparrowhawk			1		1		



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2001 – 2002

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2001 - 2002. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWEBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas. The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measures might be needed.

The counts on Lough Carra were conducted from several shore sites, and the co-operation of the landowners is gratefully acknowledged.

It is important to note that the numbers recorded are counts of those birds seen, so that some species (such as water rail and moorhen) that are difficult to see are "under-recorded". However, since the counts are made from the same sites each month, by the same people, in similar conditions (when possible), the numbers counted will indicate any significant changes.

The counts have shown the following points of interest:-

Little grebe – numbers were generally up on the previous winter, with a maximum of 30 in October.

Great crested grebe – generally much higher numbers than the previous winter, with a big influx of birds in March, although most of these birds were on passage rather than resident.

Mute Swan – higher numbers this winter, with a peak of 13 in October and four pairs in January, February and March.

Gadwall – more or less similar numbers this winter, suggesting that the population is stable and continues to be one of the largest and most important of this species in Ireland.

Teal – in the 1960s and 1970s, winter counts often recorded up to 500, especially in January. Our maximum count of 63 (and 31 last winter) suggests that there has been a substantial drop in numbers of this species visiting the lough.

Mallard – a maximum count of 92 (in December) suggests that the population has continued to decline. In the 1960s and 1970s, the wintering numbers regularly topped 1,500, and over 2,000 were sometimes recorded. The breeding population of the lake was around 150 pairs, so it is now clear that there is something drastically wrong. This is of great concern. It seems

most likely that drainage of breeding areas around the lake and the presence of mink are major causes of this catastrophic decline.

Moorhen – numbers continue to be desperately low and will probably remain so unless the mink population is controlled.

CONCLUSIONS

- Several species have shown significant declines since the 1970s, suggesting that the ecology of the lake has been modified.
- The presence of a significant population of introduced mink is probably having an ongoing negative effect on the breeding waterfowl populations.

IWEBS (Irish Wet	IWEBS (Irish Wetland Bird Survey) - Lough Carra 2001/2002										
·											
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar				
Litttle Grebe	26	30	15	14	12	2	8				
Great Crested Grebe	14	12	8	1	6	2	34				
Cormorant	4	11	12	7	8	3	4				
Grey Heron	4	3			1		1				
Mute Swan	10	13	9	11	8	8	8				
Whooper Swan			2			12					
Wigeon				43		8					
Gadwall	13		54	61	67	63	27				
Teal		7	5	25	11	20	63				
Mallard	31	33	17	92	33	48	41				
Shoveler				1	37		22				
Pochard			1		10	15	17				
Tufted Duck		27	328	191	154	98	200				
Golden eye			55	59	94	58	149				
Red breasted Merganser	1		6	3	5	12					
Water Rail		1		1			3				
Moorhen	1	1	5	1		4	5				
Coot	12				1	6	11				
Golden Plover	8	10	35		57	70	120				
Lapwing	70	30	1		60	9	5				
Snipe		1		11	1	3					
Curlew	39	12	10	6	21	33	109				
Redshank				1		1					
Kingfisher			1								
Black-headed Gull							33				
Common Gull		8					17				
Lesser Black-backed Gull	7	1									
Great Black-backed Gull					1						
Kestrel		1		1		1					
Sparrowhawk	1										



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2002 – 2003

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2002 - 2003. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWEBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas. The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measures might be needed.

The counts on Lough Carra were conducted from several shore sites, and the co-operation of the landowners is gratefully acknowledged.

It is important to note that the numbers recorded are counts of those birds seen, so that some species (such as water rail and moorhen) that are difficult to see are "under-recorded". However, since the counts are made from the same sites each month, by the same people, in similar conditions (when possible), the numbers counted will indicate any significant changes.

The counts have shown the following points of interest:-

Cormorant – numbers were greatly up on previous winters, with a maximum of 23 in January.

Mute Swan – higher numbers again this winter, with a peak of 20 in January.

Gadwall – slightly higher numbers this winter, with a peak of 82.

Tufted Duck – numbers of this species were down, with the peak of only 260 in December.

Mallard – numbers continue to be extraordinarily lower than thirty years ago, with a maximum count of 197.

Moorhen – numbers were a little higher (maximum 9), suggesting that perhaps the mink population has dropped.

Black-headed Gull and Common Gull numbers increased significantly in March. This was of interest as both species bred on the lake this year (2003).

CONCLUSION

• Although some species have shown increases recently, the evidence of significant ecological decline is now mounting. The wildfowl population of the lake has clearly suffered drastic changes over the last thirty years, most of them negative.

IWEBS (Irish Wetland Bird Survey) - Lough Carra 2002/2003										
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
Litttle Grebe	13		18	6	30	3	7			
Great Crested Grebe	10		6	3	4	16	42			
Cormorant	6		18	15	23	15	5			
Grey Heron	4		3	1	3	1	1			
Mute Swan	19		10	12	20	11	9			
Whooper Swan				4			3			
Wigeon				5	50	19				
Gadwall	30		20	65	35	82	44			
Teal	1		4	63	84	58	49			
Mallard	64		61	114	197	84	29			
Shoveler				17	6	6				
Pochard				34	2		5			
Tufted Duck	2		120	260	179	151	66			
Golden eye			51	99	152	87	36			
Red breasted Merganser			5	2	4	4	8			
Water Rail				1	1		2			
Moorhen	6		4	5	9	7	4			
Coot	13				8	6	8			
Golden Plover	4		62	80		8				
Lapwing	61		37	1	22	8	12			
Snipe			6	2	6	1	1			
Curlew	4		45	49	63	18				
Redshank						1	13			
Kingfisher			1							
Black-headed Gull	1				1	4	330			
Common Gull							36			
Lesser Black-backed Gull	13					2				
Great Black-backed Gull										
Hen Harrier				1		1				
Kestrel				1						
Sparrowhawk										

Note: no count was undertaken in October due to inclement weather.



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2003 – 2004

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2003 – 2004. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWEBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas. The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measures might be needed.

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It is important to note that the numbers recorded are counts of those birds seen, so that some species (such as water rail and moorhen) that are difficult to see are "under-recorded". However, since the counts are made from the same sites each month, by the same people, in similar conditions (when possible), the numbers counted will indicate any significant changes.

The counts have shown the following points of interest:-

Cormorant – numbers continue to increase, with a maximum of 29 in November.

Gadwall – the numbers of this species have averaged 74 over the last four winters, and seem to be fairly stable. Good news in view of the fact that the Carra population is nationally important.

Teal – although numbers peaked at 98, the highest for the last four winters, there is still no sign of a recovery to the hundreds recorded in the 1970s.

Mallard – the peak of 351 in January was the highest for some time, but still numbers continue to be extraordinarily lower than thirty years ago.

Shoveler – a maximum of 61 was the highest count for four winters, but still much lower than in the 1970s.

CONCLUSION

• Although some species have shown increases recently, the evidence of significant ecological decline is now overwhelming. The wildfowl population of the lake has clearly suffered drastic changes over the last thirty years, most of them negative. However, at least the gadwall numbers have remained stable, and tufted duck seem to still winter on the lake in good numbers.

IWEBS (Irish Wet	land Bi	rd Surv	vey) – L	ough C	arra 20	03/2004	1
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Litttle Grebe	19	28	17	2	10	11	13
Great Crested Grebe	7	3	4	4	1	7	24
Cormorant	12	14	29	15	13	6	8
Grey Heron	2	4		4	3		
Mute Swan	9	16	5	5	17	15	9
Whooper Swan			3				
Wigeon				36	131	313	33
Gadwall	48	42	10	68	46	48	49
Teal	1	8	98	30	74	32	49
Mallard	105	47	134	77	351	246	32
Shoveler			26	61	52	23	1
Pochard						22	
Tufted Duck	8	109	195	227	183	372	97
Golden eye			32	98	158	99	133
Red breasted Merganser		3	1	2	1	8	4
Water Rail	4	3		2	1		4
Moorhen	5	3	1	3	8	7	5
Coot	9		1		3	9	12
Golden Plover	8	355		80	30	60	706
Lapwing	64	393	159	135	54	310	35
Dunlin	12						
Snipe		1		1			1
Curlew	4		24	3	54	84	72
Redshank							5
Kingfisher		1					
Black-headed Gull	1	5					46
Common Gull							12
Lesser Black-backed Gull	2		1				
Great Black-backed Gull							
Hen Harrier							1
Kestrel							
Sparrowhawk		1	1		1	1	



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2004 – 2005

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2004 - 2005. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWEBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas. The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measures might be needed.

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The counts have shown the following points of interest:-

Cormorant – numbers continue to increase, with a maximum of 36 in December. The maximum counts since 2000-2001 have been 14, 12, 23, 29 and 36. This suggests and ongoing rise in the cormorant population and an increasing pressure on the fish population of the lake in winter.

Mute swan – the maximum count in the winter of 2000-2001 was 7, so the three recent winters have all been much higher (20, 17 and 18), suggesting that the population has recovered to some extent.

Gadwall – the numbers of this species seem to be remaining stable at around 60 to 80. So, the Carra population remains nationally important. A few were also seen in mid-summer, so there is even the possibility that we might see a breeding attempt soon.

Teal – numbers peaked in the 90s again, but there is still no sign of a recovery to the hundreds recorded in the 1970s.

Mallard – the peak of 110 in September was followed by a decline to less than 100 throughout the winter. There is still no sign of any recovery of the population of this species.

Shoveler – a maximum of 4 was the lowest count for five winters. Lough Carra was previously listed as holding a nationally important wintering population of this species, but this is no longer the case with the average maximum count at around 25 in recent years.

CONCLUSION

• The wildfowl population of the lake, particularly the dabbling ducks (mallard, teal, and shoveler) is clearly not recovering to levels recorded in the 1970s and 1980s. We do not yet know what the causes are for the decline, but they are likely to include ecological damage resulting from the ongoing eutrophication of the Lough, increased predation (from introduced mink and a rise in the crow population) and changing habitats around the lakeshore.

IWEBS (Irish Wetland Bird Survey) – Lough Carra 2004/2005									
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Litttle Grebe	19	34		4	1	4	6		
Great Crested Grebe	8	9		34		18	25		
Cormorant	28	18		36	17	8	7		
Grey Heron	1	4		1	1	4	4		
Mute Swan	8	9		10	18	14	14		
Whooper Swan		3							
Greenland white-fronted							51		
goose									
Wigeon				2	41	61	38		
Gadwall	62	41		7	37	26	31		
Teal	3	14		53	48	38	96		
Mallard	110	64		52	23	65	82		
Shoveler	2			4			4		
Pochard				60			40		
Tufted Duck	9	55		320	292	116	159		
Golden eye		34		75	90	93	78		
Red breasted Merganser		1			4	6	2		
Water Rail	1					1			
Moorhen	5	5		2	3	9	19		
Coot	1			1	2	15	12		
Golden Plover	148	435		29	150	576			
Lapwing	43	200		14	17	10	13		
Dunlin									
Snipe		3		2		3			
Curlew	34	41		66	27	21	59		
Redshank				1		2	2		
Kingfisher		1							
Black-headed Gull	1	5				14			
Common Gull						1			
Lesser Black-backed Gull	2	1		1					
Great Black-backed Gull									
Hen Harrier				1	1				
Kestrel				1			1		
Sparrowhawk		2		1	1				



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2005 – 2006

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2005 - 2006. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWEBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas (now National parks and Wildlife Service). The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measures might be needed.

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The counts have shown the following points of interest:-

Mute swan – the maximum count of 22 suggests that the population has recovered from the low in and is now more or less stable.

Gadwall – the numbers of this species were notably lower this winter, with perhaps only around 50% of numbers recorded in other, recent winters. However, the good news is that in the summer (of 2006) there was firm evidence of successful breeding. This is the first record of this species breeding on Lough Carra.

Teal – numbers were even lower than usual.

Mallard – There is still no sign of any recovery of the population of this species. Although there was a peak of 157 in January, numbers in the other months were extremely low.

During the last two years, Chris Meehan, a postgraduate research student at GMIT in Castlebar, has been conducting more intensive surveys of both the wintering wildfowl populations and the breeding populations of ducks, especially mallard. He is now in the process of writing up his results and we hope that they will be available early in 2007. We already know that his work on the breeding mallards confirms our observations that the population has crashed since the 1970s, but we hope that Chris's research will help identify the critical factors causing this decline.

CONCLUSION

- The dabbling ducks (mallard, teal, and shoveler) are still not recovering to levels recorded in the 1970s and 1980s. We hope that Chris Meehan's work will help identify the reasons for this.
- The first record of Gadwall breeding on the lake provides a small note of optimism. We know that Red-breasted mergansers also bred successfully in 2006.
- There have been more frequent sightings of otters on and around the lake recently. It is believed that otters may drive mink away from their territories, so perhaps this is another good sign.

IWEBS (Irish Wet	land Bi	rd Sur	vey) – l	_ough C	arra 20	05/2006	<u> </u>
·							
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Litttle Grebe	30	22	22	19	9	30	7
Great Crested Grebe	8	4	4	1	1	16	12
Cormorant	18	10	30	18	21	14	15
Grey Heron	3	2	1	2			
Mute Swan	20	10	12	5	13	22	3
Whooper Swan							
Greenland white-fronted							
goose							
Wigeon			30	52	52	60	14
Gadwall	40	44		8	23	24	32
Teal	5	15		38	69	25	29
Mallard	33	40	46	32	157	34	27
Shoveler		3		10	32	16	2
Pochard						45	
Tufted Duck	4	40	250	181	133	172	73
Golden eye		1	43	73	81	92	48
Red breasted Merganser		4		2			
Water Rail		1			3	3	
Moorhen	4	3	3	3	6	11	
Coot	2			1	4	11	11
Golden Plover	92	81					6
Lapwing	53	8	75	25	20	2	
Dunlin							
Snipe			2	2	1	2	1
Curlew	4	17	10	23	67	63	2
Redshank	1					1	1
Kingfisher				1			
Black-headed Gull						8	102
Common Gull						5	80
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1						
Great Black-backed Gull							
Hen Harrier							
Kestrel		1	1	1			
Peregrine		1					
Sparrowhawk		1				1	



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2006 – 2007

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2006 – 2007. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWEBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas (now National Parks and Wildlife Service). The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measures might be needed.

The counts on Lough Carra were conducted from several shore sites, and the co-operation of the landowners is gratefully acknowledged.

It is important to note that the numbers recorded are counts of those birds seen, so that some species (such as water rail and moorhen) that are difficult to see are likely to be "under-recorded". However, since the counts are made from the same sites each month, by the same people, in similar conditions (when possible), the numbers counted will indicate any significant changes.

The counts have shown the following points of interest:-

Little Grebe and Great-crested Grebe – for both these species, these were the lowest counts since the winter of 2000-2001.

Gadwall – the numbers of this species have declined over the last four winters, despite the fact that they now breed on the lake. This is very worrying since Lough Carra has been one of Ireland's most important sites for Gadwall. Maximum numbers are now less than half those recorded in the period 2000 to 2004. We do not yet have any evidence of the cause of this decrease, but hope that it is just a temporary drop in the population.

Mallard – Numbers continue to be desperately low in comparison with those recorded in the 1970s and 1980s.

Curlew – The numbers of this species recorded have dropped significantly. The maximum count of 20 compares with the previous average of 72 and is less than half the previous lowest count (43 in 2000-2001). We suspect that this is just part of a more general decline due, at least in part, to the decline in earthworms (their main food) which has resulted from slurry spreading activities.

Chris Meehan's research recently completed for a master's degree at GMIT suggests that the decline in waterfowl numbers on Lough Carra since the surveys of 1967 to 1980) is on a larger scale and included more species than previously thought. A total of seven species of duck (Teal, Mallard, Wigeon, Shoveler, Pochard, Tufted Duck and Redbreasted Merganser) have declined by between 58% and 91% since the counts conducted in the 1960s/1970s. The lake used to host over 100 pairs, one of the largest and most concentrated Mallard breeding populations in the country, but the population is no longer nationally important with a massive decline of nearly 90% occurring between the mid 1980s and the mid 1990s. Chris Meehan's breeding surveys conducted in 2005 and 2006 found that the breeding Mallard population on eight islands has declined by over 90% since the previous surveys. A change in island habitats and high levels of predation on nests and nesting females by American Mink and Hooded (Grey) Crows continues to suppress breeding numbers and prevent populations from making even a slight recovery. As well as Mallard, the American Mink have also preyed upon Teal, Tufted Duck, Coot, Moorhen and Common Gull.

Chris Meehan's detailed results in the form of his complete thesis are available elsewhere on this website.

CONCLUSIONS

- The breeding ducks (mallard, teal, tufted duck and red-breasted merganser) are still not showing any signs of recovering to levels recorded in the 1970s. Chris Meehan's work has identified some of the reasons for this, of which predation by American Mink and Grey Crows is probably the most important.
- Chris Meehan's research also suggests that the ongoing nutrient enrichment of the lake is a negative factor in the continuing decline of the lake's waterfowl ecology.
- Unless action is taken by the responsible authorities to address the serious problems that have been identified, it is unlikely that any improvement will occur in the foreseeable future.

IWEBS (Irish Wetland Bird Survey) - Lough Carra 2006/2007									
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Litttle Grebe	21	25		4	13	16	6		
Great Crested Grebe	9	11		1	5	15	3		
Cormorant	18	19		30	12	17	4		
Grey Heron	3	4		1	2	1	2		
Mute Swan	4	7		18	5	8	9		
Whooper Swan				4	5				
Greenland white-fronted									
goose									
Wigeon				70	27	30	24		
Gadwall	20	17		34	24	16	22		
Teal		2		66	61	21	93		
Mallard	124	39		109	57	55	47		
Shoveler				22	20				
Pochard				240					
Tufted Duck	14	28		155	217	128	131		
Golden eye				59	89	114	64		
Red breasted Merganser	17	7		1		5	2		
Water Rail	2	3			2	4			
Moorhen	1	3		1	6	11	2		
Coot	1				1	8	10		
Golden Plover		3				60			
Lapwing				5	4	40	4		
Dunlin									
Snipe		2		2		1	1		
Curlew	1	4		4	2	20	6		
Redshank							2		
Kingfisher									
Black-headed Gull				80			4		
Common Gull							22		
Lesser Black-backed Gull									
Great Black-backed Gull									
Hen Harrier									
Kestrel		1				1			
Peregrine									
Sparrowhawk	2					1			



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2007 – 2008

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2007 – 2008. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWEBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas (now National Parks and Wildlife Service). The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measures might be needed.

The counts on Lough Carra were conducted from several shore sites, and the co-operation of the landowners is gratefully acknowledged. It is important to note that the numbers recorded are counts of those birds seen, so that some species (such as water rail and moorhen) that are difficult to see are likely to be "under-recorded". However, since the counts are made from the same sites each month, by the same people, in similar conditions (when possible), the numbers counted will indicate any significant changes.

The counts have shown the following points of interest:-

Little Grebe – numbers have recovered since the low of the previous winter.

Gadwall – the numbers of this species have remained low over the last five winters, despite the fact that they now breed on the lake.

Mallard – Numbers continue to be desperately low in comparison with those recorded in the 1970s and 1980s.

Shoveler – The count of 75 in December is just over double the previous highest count since 2000. Nonetheless, numbers remain extremely low in comparison with those recorded in the 1970s.

Pochard – This winter saw the lowest count (just 6) since 2000, and a big decrease on the 240 from the previous winter.

Tufted duck – The maximum of 185 was also the lowest since 2000.

Curlew – The numbers of this species recorded have dropped significantly. The maximum count of 31 compares with the previous average of 72.

CONCLUSIONS

- The breeding ducks (mallard, teal, tufted duck and red-breasted merganser) are still not showing any signs of recovering to levels recorded in the 1970s.
- The noticeable drop in numbers of pochard and tufted duck may be due to the very mild winter weather.

IWEBS (Irish Wet	land Bi	rd Sur	vey) – l	_ough C	arra 20	07/2008	3
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Litttle Grebe	42	30	30	23	31	11	
Great Crested Grebe	10	2	1	1	2	20	
Cormorant	7	26	13	20	17	5	
Grey Heron	1	1	3	1	2		
Mute Swan	11	6	5	13	15	4	
Whooper Swan					3		
Greenland white-fronted							
goose							
Wigeon			34	48	9	73	
Gadwall	14	15	7	43	30	43	
Teal	3	29	32	63	32	71	
Mallard	24	41	90	145	107	79	
Shoveler		9	3	75	10	6	
Pochard						6	
Tufted Duck	17	42	122	185	181	170	
Golden eye			87	109	108	124	
Red breasted Merganser				6	6	4	
Water Rail				2			
Moorhen	2	3	5	6	5	10	
Coot		2			1	8	
Golden Plover		196				31	
Lapwing		6			60	25	
Dunlin							
Snipe					2	3	
Curlew	8			4	6	31	
Redshank							
Kingfisher			1				
Black-headed Gull		38					
Common Gull		2					
Lesser Black-backed Gull				1	1		
Great Black-backed Gull							
Hen Harrier							
Kestrel	1						
Peregrine	1		1				
Sparrowhawk							

Note: no count was undertaken in March due to inclement weather.



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2008 – 2009

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2008 – 2009. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWeBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas (now National Parks and Wildlife Service). The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measures might be needed.

The counts on Lough Carra were conducted from several shore sites, and the co-operation of the landowners is gratefully acknowledged.

It is important to note that the numbers recorded are counts of those birds seen, so that some species (such as water rail and moorhen) that are difficult to see are likely to be "underrecorded". However, since the counts are made from the same sites each month, by the same people, in similar conditions (when possible), the numbers counted will indicate any significant changes.

The counts have shown the following main points of interest:-

Gadwall – the maximum count of 31 is the lowest since we started IWeBS in 2000. For the last four winters, the numbers of this species have been around half those recorded in the previous five winters.

Mallard – Numbers have declined even further, with the maximum count of 55, compared to the previous lowest maximum of 92. This is clearly an indication of serious negative impacts on this species.

Goldeneye – this species seems to be fairly stable, with good numbers present through the main part of the winter.

CONCLUSIONS

- The mallard population appears to have suffered an even greater decline in numbers and there can be little hope of recovery until the causes are recognised and addressed.
- The drop in gadwall numbers over the last four winters is of concern, particularly since Carra had a nationally important population until recently.

IWeBS (Irish Wetland Bird Survey) - Lough Carra 2008/2009										
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
Litttle Grebe	30	17	13	15	17	15	13			
Great Crested Grebe	4	1	1	2		17	18			
Cormorant	11	28	24	18	27	13	18			
Grey Heron	2	3	2	2	1	1	2			
Mute Swan	4	3	2	14	7	10	15			
Whooper Swan						4	4			
Greenland white-fronted										
goose										
Wigeon		26	11	1	132	16	21			
Gadwall	3	20	20		31	16	6			
Teal		25	51	101	95	99	17			
Mallard	40	42	30	55	45	38	37			
Shoveler				1	15					
Pochard						38				
Tufted Duck		109	93	113	211	177	83			
Golden eye		63	62	135	104	149	31			
Red breasted Merganser	4			2	1					
Water Rail	2				1	1				
Moorhen	2	2	5	11	6	9	4			
Coot		4	4		2	8	11			
Golden Plover				3		44	180			
Lapwing	19	20		1	14	13	1			
Dunlin										
Snipe		1	1	4		2				
Curlew	34	38	28	16	44	1	2			
Redshank				1			1			
Kingfisher										
Black-headed Gull						1	104			
Common Gull						2	29			
Lesser Black-backed Gull					1	1				
Great Black-backed Gull										
Hen Harrier				1		1				
Kestrel		1					1			
Peregrine				1						
Sparrowhawk										



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2009 – 2010

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2009 – 2010. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWeBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas (now National Parks and Wildlife Service). The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measures might be needed.

The counts on Lough Carra were conducted from several shore sites, and the co-operation of the landowners is gratefully acknowledged.

It is important to note that the numbers recorded are counts of those birds seen, so that some species (such as water rail and moorhen) that are difficult to see are likely to be "underrecorded". However, since the counts are made from the same sites each month, by the same people, in similar conditions (when possible), the numbers counted will indicate any significant changes.

Unfortunately, a combination of factors reduced our coverage this winter to just three counts (September, February and March). The weather conditions were mostly to blame for this, especially in January when the whole lake was frozen over.

Since so few counts were conducted, it is not possible to draw many firm conclusions. However, the following points are of interest:-

Little grebe – September saw the highest ever count (at 43), and with 40 still present in February it seems they survived the worst of the bad weather quite well.

Great-crested grebe – each spring sees numbers of this species passing through on migration and the March count of 53 was the highest ever.

Wigeon – the total of 6 was the lowest ever count, probably because of the bad weather.

Gadwall – the maximum count of 25 is even lower than the previous winter and is very worrying.

Mallard – Maximum numbers are still below 100.

CONCLUSIONS

- The dabbling duck population (wigeon, gadwall, teal, mallard and shoveler) was the lowest ever with a maximum of 177 (the long-term average since 2000 is around 400). This is probably due mainly to the very bad winter weather.
- The continuing decline in gadwall numbers is of serious concern, particularly since Carra had a nationally important population until recently.

IWeBS (Irish Wet	and Bi	rd Surv	/ey) – L	ough C	arra 20	09/2010)
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Litttle Grebe	43					40	27
Great Crested Grebe	4					7	53
Cormorant	17					15	13
Grey Heron							
Mute Swan	10					13	11
Whooper Swan	_					13	
Greenland white-fronted							
goose							
Wigeon						6	
Gadwall	1					25	8
Teal	1					67	56
Mallard	39					47	79
Shoveler							
Pochard							26
Tufted Duck	16					205	173
Golden eye						102	47
Red breasted Merganser							
Water Rail							1
Moorhen	2					6	7
Coot	3					14	24
Golden Plover							142
Lapwing						14	6
Dunlin							
Snipe						1	
Curlew						4	
Redshank							3
Kingfisher							
Black-headed Gull							7
Common Gull						1	24
Lesser Black-backed Gull							1
Great Black-backed Gull							
Hen Harrier						1	
Kestrel						1	
Peregrine							
Sparrowhawk						2	

n.b. no counts were possible in October, November, December and January.



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2010 – 2011

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2010 - 2011. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWeBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas (now National Parks and Wildlife Service). The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measures might be needed.

The counts on Lough Carra were conducted from several shore sites, and the co-operation of the landowners is gratefully acknowledged.

It is important to note that the numbers recorded are counts of those birds seen, so that some species (such as water rail and moorhen) that are difficult to see are likely to be "underrecorded". However, since the counts are made from the same sites each month, by the same people, in similar conditions (when possible), the numbers counted will indicate any significant changes.

The following points are of interest:-

Greylag goose - a small population seems to have established itself in the northwestern basin, especially around Quinn's bay.

Gadwall – the maximum count of 20 indicates a continuing decline and is cause for concern.

Mallard – Maximum numbers are still below 100.

Long-tailed duck – normally a marine species, two appeared in November. In the 1960s and 1970s this species was seen fairly regularly.

Coot – 36 in February was the highest count in recent years.

CONCLUSIONS

• The dabbling duck population (wigeon, gadwall, teal, mallard and shoveler) was the even lower than the previous winter with a maximum of 165. This is perhaps due mainly to the very bad winter weather.

• The continuing decline in gadwall numbers is of serious concern, particularly since Carra had a nationally important population until recently.

IWeBS (Irish Wetland Bird Survey) - Lough Carra 2010/2011									
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Litttle Grebe	27	21	14	Dec	14	13	22		
Great Crested Grebe	9	4	8		5	10	24		
Cormorant	19	12	10		24	11	5		
Grey Heron	3	12	10		24	1	3		
Mute Swan	10	7	7		15	11	10		
Whooper Swan	10	,	,		22	11	10		
Greenland white-fronted									
goose									
Greylag goose						7	6		
Wigeon			37		23	14	12		
Gadwall	10	4	20		11	8	13		
Teal	2	20	25		29	14	11		
Mallard	46	22	47		55	61	50		
Shoveler			18		- 00	<u> </u>	00		
Pochard			2			60	5		
Tufted Duck	6	100	217		234	311	185		
Long-tailed duck			2			<u> </u>			
Golden eye		16	61		129	52	53		
Red breasted Merganser					1	1			
Water Rail			1		2	-	2		
Moorhen	2	4	8		6	5	6		
Coot					15	36	26		
Golden Plover	5						160		
Lapwing		10	60		21	14	11		
Dunlin									
Snipe		1	3						
Curlew	28		35		55	54	10		
Redshank						1	6		
Greenshank							1		
Kingfisher			2						
Black-headed Gull							217		
Common Gull						1	112		
Lesser Black-backed Gull	2						3		
Great Black-backed Gull						_			
Hen Harrier									
Kestrel		1	1						
Peregrine						_			
Sparrowhawk		1				2			

n.b. no count was possible in December.



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2011 – 2012

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2011 – 2012. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWeBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas (now National Parks and Wildlife Service). The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measures might be needed.

The counts on Lough Carra were conducted from several shore sites, and the co-operation of the landowners is gratefully acknowledged.

It is important to note that the numbers recorded are counts of those birds seen, so that some species (such as water rail and moorhen) that are difficult to see are likely to be "under-recorded". However, since the counts are made from the same sites each month, by the same people, in similar conditions (when possible), the numbers counted will indicate any significant changes.

Unfortunately, inclement weather and difficult conditions precluded the possibility of carrying out counts in September, October, December and March, thus making our coverage of the winter the least comprehensive since we started in 2000.

The following points are of interest:-

Gadwall – the maximum count of 30 indicates a welcome slight increase in this species.

Mallard – Maximum numbers are still below 100.

Long-tailed duck – normally a marine species, six were present in November. In the 1960s and 1970s this species was seen fairly regularly.

CONCLUSIONS

• The dabbling duck population (wigeon, gadwall, teal, mallard and shoveler) has perhaps begun to recover slightly with the maximum up from the previous winter (165) to 242. Nonetheless, numbers are still catastrophically lower than in the 1960s and 1970s.

Sept Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar	IWeBS (Irish Wetland Bird Survey) – Lough Carra 2011/2012								
Littlle Grebe 11 9 15 Great Crested Grebe 5 3 14 Cormorant 18 6 20 Grey Heron 1 3 1 Mute Swan 3 12 12 Whooper Swan 5 5 Greenland white-fronted goose 5 6 Wigeon 46 8 Gadwall 18 30 20 Teal 65 62 47 Mallard 47 68 80 Shoveler 21 4 4 Pochard 5 106 5 Tufted Duck 210 229 205 Long-tailed duck 6 6 6 Golden eye 32 71 94 Red breasted Merganser 2 2 Water Rail 3 5 10 Coot 2 13 Ringed plover 50 120 <		Cont	Oot	Nov	Doo	lon	Eob	Mor	
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Redshank Greenshank Kingfisher Black-headed Gull Common Gull Common Gull Lesser Black-backed Gull Great Black-backed Gull Hen Harrier 1 Kestrel Peregrine				9		30	26		
Kingfisher Black-headed Gull Common Gull Lesser Black-backed Gull Great Black-backed Gull Hen Harrier Kestrel Peregrine 1									
Black-headed Gull Common Gull Lesser Black-backed Gull Great Black-backed Gull Hen Harrier 1 Kestrel Peregrine 1 1	Greenshank								
Black-headed Gull Common Gull Lesser Black-backed Gull Great Black-backed Gull Hen Harrier 1 Kestrel Peregrine 1 1	Kingfisher								
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Lesser Black-backed Gull Great Black-backed Gull Hen Harrier Kestrel Peregrine 1									
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Kestrel 1 1				1					
Peregrine 1				-					
				1					
QUALIDAMI	Sparrowhawk			1					

n.b. no counts were possible in September, October, December and March.



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2012 – 2013

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2012-2013. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWeBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas (now National Parks and Wildlife Service). The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measures might be needed.

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Unfortunately, inclement weather and difficult conditions precluded the possibility of carrying out counts in September, November, December and March, thus making our coverage of the winter the least comprehensive since we started in 2000.

The following points are of interest:-

Gadwall – the maximum count of 44 indicates a welcome slight increase in this species.

Mallard – Maximum numbers are still below 100.

Great northern diver — normally a marine species, one was present in February. We have occasionally seen this species on the lough over the last twelve years.

Mute swan – an exceptionally high count (25) of this species in February.

CONCLUSIONS

• The dabbling duck population (wigeon, gadwall, teal, mallard and shoveler) which had shown signs of a slight recovery in 2011/2012, dropped from a maximum of 264 in the previous winter 214. Numbers are still catastrophically low.



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2012 – 2013

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2012 - 2013. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWeBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas (now National Parks and Wildlife Service). The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measures might be needed.

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IWeBS (Irish Wetland Bird Survey) - Lough Carra 2012/2013										
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
Litttle Grebe	Sept	18	INOV	Dec	5	17	iviai			
Great Crested Grebe		5			3	9				
Cormorant		17			5	11				
Grey Heron		17			1	2				
Mute Swan		8			18	25				
Whooper Swan		2			12	43				
Greenland white-fronted					12	43				
goose										
Greylag goose						7				
Wigeon		1			25	1				
Gadwall		11			44	19				
Teal		13			64	79				
Mallard		51			65	65				
		31			03	1				
Shoveler Pochard						1				
Tufted Duck		94			161	193				
		94			101	193				
Long-tailed duck		2			70	76				
Golden eye		2			79	76				
Red breasted Merganser		4				2				
Water Rail		1			4	7				
Moorhen					4	7				
Coot					8	5				
Ringed plover		4.0			40	000				
Golden Plover		19			40	260				
Lapwing					4	43				
Dunlin					4					
Snipe					1					
Curlew					16	13				
Redshank		1				1				
Greenshank										
Kingfisher										
Black-headed Gull		2				1	1			
Common Gull										
Lesser Black-backed Gull		50								
Great Black-backed Gull										
Hen Harrier		1								
Kestrel		1								
Peregrine										
Sparrowhawk										

n.b. no counts were possible in September, November, December and March.



LOUGH CARRA "IWEBS" BIRD CENSUS WINTER 2013 – 2014

The following table shows the numbers of waterbirds and raptors recorded on the monthly census through the winter of 2013 – 2014. These counts were conducted as part of the nationwide wetland bird survey (IWeBS = Irish Wetland Bird Survey) established by BirdWatch Ireland and Duchas (now National Parks and Wildlife Service). The purpose of the annual census is to monitor wetland bird numbers as indicators of the ecological health of our wetlands, and to determine where the important bird populations are and where conservation measures might be needed.

The counts on Lough Carra were conducted from several shore sites, and the co-operation of the landowners is gratefully acknowledged.

It is important to note that the numbers recorded are counts of those birds seen, so that some species (such as water rail and moorhen) that are difficult to see are likely to be "under-recorded". However, since the counts are made from the same sites each month, by the same people, in similar conditions (when possible), the numbers counted will indicate any significant changes.

Unfortunately, inclement weather and difficult conditions precluded the possibility of carrying out counts in September, December, February and March, thus making our coverage of the winter the least comprehensive since we started in 2000.

The following points are of interest:-

Gadwall – the maximum count of 22 is just half of that from the previous winter.

Mallard – Maximum numbers rose over 100 for the first time since 2007/2008.

Greylag goose – this species is now breeding successfully in the area and the population continues to rise.

Greenland white-fronted goose – although they are usually in the general area, we seldom see them on our counts, so this flock of 15 feeding near Kilkeeran was a welcome bonus!

CONCLUSIONS

• The dabbling duck population (wigeon, gadwall, teal, mallard and shoveler) is still at rock bottom with maximum numbers of 217, despite the welcome increase in mallard.

IWeBS (Irish Wetland Bird Survey) - Lough Carra 2013/2014										
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
Litttle Grebe	Осрг	23	16	Dec	21	1 00	IVIGI			
Great Crested Grebe			10							
Cormorant		18	16		10					
Grey Heron		3	2		10					
Mute Swan		12	4		15					
Whooper Swan		12	4		27					
Greenland white-fronted					15					
goose					13					
Greylag goose					36					
Wigeon			15		19					
Gadwall		10	22		13					
Teal		43	44		18					
Mallard		53	21		125					
Shoveler		55	7		123					
			/							
Pochard		40	150		148					
Tufted Duck		42	156		148					
Long-tailed duck			3		60					
Golden eye			42		62					
Red breasted Merganser										
Water Rail					4					
Moorhen		1	9		4					
Coot			2							
Ringed plover		00								
Golden Plover		28								
Lapwing		7			50					
Dunlin										
Snipe		1								
Curlew		31	9		41					
Redshank										
Greenshank										
Kingfisher										
Black-headed Gull										
Common Gull										
Lesser Black-backed Gull		1								
Great Black-backed Gull										
Hen Harrier										
Kestrel			1							
Peregrine										
Sparrowhawk										

n.b. no counts were possible in September, December, February and March.