

Inland marshes, lakes and rivers

Ballinlough

Grid reference: S4403

Ordnance Survey Discovery map: # 75

Habitat: Small reedbed-fringed lake.

Main interest: Waterfowl.

Regular/annual: Whooper Swan, Teal, other duck, Water Rail, Redpoll.

Scarcer species & rarities: Green Sandpiper, Chough (5 km from sea).

Access: Ballinlough is just west of Kill village, which is signposted at the Sweep cross (see under Knockaderry) and at Carroll's Cross (see Ballyshunnock), both on the main Waterford-Cork road. A rough track up the east side of the lake, and continuing north along the inflow stream, provides easy access.

Further details:

Although a much smaller lake than nearby Knockaderry and Ballyshunnock, Ballinlough will usually provide good views of several waterfowl species in winter. The lake is shallow and biologically productive, providing good feeding for swans, Teal and Mallard. Mute Swans breed annually, while Whooper Swans occur in most winters. Early morning may be the best time for duck, as they often spend the rest of the day at the larger lakes, where they are less subject to disturbance. Moorhen are present all year round, Water Rail winter and probably breed in the reeds which fringe most of the lake.

The lake rarely dries out enough to attract migrating waders in autumn, but Redshank and Green Sandpiper have occurred, and Snipe breed along the inflow stream north of the lake. Good numbers of Sedge Warblers also breed along the stream and around the lake, along with Grasshopper Warbler, Whitethroat, Redpoll and other passerines.

Ballyscanlan Lakes & Hills including Carrigavrantry Reservoir

Grid reference: S50 - S5403 (Ballyscanlan Lake), S5402 (Carrigavrantry)

Ordnance Survey Discovery map: # 76

Habitat: Lakes, coniferous forestry.

Main interest: Waterfowl; breeding passerines.

Regular/annual: Siskin; common warblers; breeding Little Grebes.

Scarcer species & rarities: Hen Harrier, Red Grouse, Crossbill.

Access: From Tramore take the coast road to Fennor and turn right from there at the church. Veer left at the next junction and a short distance further on, a fork in the road leads left to Ballyscanlan Lake, or right to the top of the hill from where Carrigavrantry Reservoir can be reached by walking down through the forest near the waterworks. From Waterford take the Cork road and 4.5 km west of the Regional Technical College turn left (signposted for Tramore). 4 km further on veer right, just beyond Ballynaclogh Cross Roads. Proceed then for about 3 km to Ballyscanlan Lake on the right, or left up the hill through the forest for Carrigavrantry.

Further details:

These two small lakes, 7 km from Tramore, are set in extensive conifer plantations (mainly young re-planted stock at present), on either side of the Ballyscanlan Hills.

Ballyscanlan Lake is bordered on one side by a forestry plantation with open farmland on the other and much of the lake is fringed by a small reedbed, more prolific on the west side. The lake can be viewed from the road and is always worth checking, though bird numbers are usually low at any time of year. Small numbers of Mallard, Tufted Duck and Pochard occur in winter, and there are occasional records of Goldeneye. In summer, Mute Swans and Little Grebes breed, with Water Rail likely. Breeding passerines include Sedge Warblers and, in the forest canopy and scrub nearby, many Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers.

Carrigavrantry Reservoir is a popular location for trout anglers. For this reason and its small size, bird numbers are always low, even in winter. Mute Swans usually breed, and Common Sandpipers have done so in the past. The reservoir is of regional importance for the calcifuge plants present on the west shore, otherwise rare in Waterford. The pine forest overlooking the reservoir has proved good for Crossbills in some years, with breeding recorded in the 1980s, and Siskins also breed. Hen Harrier too are regularly recorded, as are the more common raptors.

Ballyshunnock Reservoir

Grid reference: S40 - S4509

Ordnance Survey Discovery map: # 75

Habitat: Constructed reservoir but with 'natural' margins, including willow scrub.

Main interest: Wintering & breeding waterfowl; passage waders; breeding warblers.

Regular/annual: Little & Great Crested Grebe, common duck, Whooper Swan, Common & Green Sandpiper.

Scarcer species & rarities: Red-throated Diver, Bewick's Swan, Shelduck, Gadwall, Pintail, Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, Long-tailed Duck, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Little Stint, Ruff, Jack Snipe, Wood Sandpiper, Black Redstart.

Highlights: Lesser Scaup (Nov 1999).

Access: About 18 km from Waterford city and 30 km from Dungarvan, Ballyshunnock is best reached from the main Waterford-Cork road. From Waterford, turn right (left if coming from Dungarvan) at Carroll's Cross to reach the lake and causeway, where good parking space is available. From Coolfin, go into Portlaw and take the road that leads left to the Catholic church up on the hill; from here Ballyshunnock is just 5 km away, straight on. Most of the lake margin is accessible when water levels are low, but avoid walking near the dense lakeside vegetation during April-July when waterfowl are nesting. The southern margin of the lake near the outflow (beside the tower) is out-of-bounds, but birds on the water can be viewed (at a distance) from the causeway.

Further details:

Formed by the damming of the Dawn River in the early 1970s, Ballyshunnock Reservoir soon established itself as perhaps one of the most important lake for wintering waterfowl in Co Waterford. A good variety of birds also breed here, and at migration periods the lake can be good for passage waders. Shooting and boating are not allowed but the site is popular with local birdwatchers and (by permit) for trout fishing. The causeway and road, separating the main part of the lake from a smaller backwater, allows good views of birds on both stretches of water. (Unfortunately, this road is nowadays quite busy with traffic, so care is needed.)

Visits in winter will always produce several species of duck, mainly Mallard, Teal, Tufted Duck and Pochard but occasionally Gadwall, Shoveler or Pintail. Long-tailed Duck, scarce visitors even on the Waterford coast, have turned up here on several occasions. Rarities too are recorded, like the Ring-necked Duck on two occasions, and single Ruddy Duck and Lesser Scaup that have appeared in late autumn or winter. Whooper Swans, up to several dozen, are often present in the cold months, either on the water or in nearby fields. Large flocks of gulls (mainly Black-headed and Common) can be present, but, surprisingly, scarcer species like Glaucous or Little Gull have apparently not been recorded. Several hundred Lapwing, and fewer Curlew, are present every winter and flocks of Golden Plover sometimes feed in adjacent fields. At times, large numbers of both waders and wildfowl fly in at dusk, to roost overnight, probably including birds from other lakes and from the River Suir around Coolfin.

Also worth searching for in winter are Chiffchaffs, which have been seen in December and January feeding in the lakeside scrub. Much larger numbers of warblers are present in spring and summer, when a dozen or more pairs each of Sedge and Willow Warblers breed, their song territories spread right around the lake among reeds and willow scrub. Ballyshunnock can also be a good site for Grasshopper Warblers. A good range of other passerine species, including Redpolls, Whitethroats and Goldcrests, also breed. From July onwards, large numbers of newly fledged passerines are present, and the scrub can be alive with young birds.

Larger breeding species include a pair (occasionally two) of Mute Swans, several pairs of Little Grebes, Moorhens and Coots, and probably a pair or two of Water Rails. The main birdwatching attraction in summer are Great Crested Grebes, a pair of which have attempted to breed in many years since 1977. However, the nest contents are usually lost to predators, particularly if water levels are low.

In the first few years after the reservoir was created, water levels often fell dramatically over the summer, due more to ground seepage than lack of rainfall. In some autumns all that remained was a small channel of water running through hectares of mud. Although such conditions were bad for breeding waterfowl, the large expanse of mud provided very attractive feeding areas for waders flying over in the autumn. Species such as Little Stint were much more frequent here in the 1970s than recently, and in 1973 the muddy margins produced Waterford's first North American wader, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. More recently, water levels have tended to drop more gradually, producing drier and more vegetated margins. However, there are almost always a few patches of wet mud, and these are well worth scanning for the occasional Ruff, Greenshank or other species. Common Sandpipers are the most regular passage wader, and Ballyshunnock is also a good site for Green Sandpiper.

Belle Lake

Grid reference: S60 - S6604

Ordnance Survey Discovery map: # 76

Habitat: Freshwater lake with extensive reedbed; deciduous woodland along margin.

Main interest: Winter waterfowl; breeding & passage warblers.

Typical birds: Great Crested Grebe (has bred), Whooper Swan, Pochard, Goldeneye, Water Rail, breeding & passage Sedge & Reed Warbler, Redpoll, Reed Bunting.

Scarcer species & rarities: Red-throated Diver, Little Egret, Gadwall, Scaup, Ruddy Duck, Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Marsh Harrier, Green Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull, Black Tern.

Access & further details:

Conveniently located beside the main Waterford-Dunmore road (see Dunmore East for access details), Belle Lake is always worth at least a quick look on the way to or from Dunmore East or other coastal sites. This is the largest natural lake in Waterford, and more regularly holds Goldeneye than the other lakes. Other diving ducks also occur, sometimes in good numbers but scarce in other winters. Teal and Mallard are fairly regular, but may be hidden in the reeds which border the west and south margins of the lake. Great Crested Grebes occur occasionally, and bred here in 1979-80. Mute Swans are resident throughout the year (and breed), and Whooper Swans occasionally fly in to the lake in winter. However, the flock of Whoopers that occurred in the fields to the west or south of the lake during the 1980s and 1990s are nowadays generally absent.

The reedbed at the south side of the lake is the largest in east Waterford, and holds good numbers of breeding Sedge Warblers and Reed Buntings. Grasshopper Warblers also breed, in rough ground bordering the south end of the reedbed, and Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers and Redpolls are prominent in summer. Water Rails winter and breed in the reedbed. The reedbed nowadays holds a small breeding population of Reed Warblers, a recent colonist in Co Waterford, and the species also occurs on passage here.

Belle Lake wood, bordering the roadside at the north-east end of the lake, is worth a listen in spring and autumn, as Stock Dove, Treecreeper, Blackcap and Chiffchaff all breed, and there is a good-sized Rookery here.

Blackwater Callows

Grid reference: X0199 west to W9299.-

Ordnance Survey Discovery map: # 81

Habitat: Flooded pasture-fields (callows) along R. Blackwater; extensive woodlands.

Main interest: Wintering wildfowl and waders.

Regular/annual: Whooper Swan, Shoveler, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Sandpiper, Sand Martin, Jay.

Scarcer species & rarities: Green-winged Teal, Green Sandpiper.

Best bird: Blue-winged Teal, autumn 1994.

Access: From Cappoquin take the Lismore road and turn off right just before Lismore Bridge and Lismore Castle. The Owennashad River enters the Blackwater here and this fast-flowing river from the Knockmealdowns is worth checking for Dipper and Grey Wagtail. Once the golf course on the left hand side of the road comes into view, you will begin to see birds in the marshy area beyond the fairways. Further on, the birds are more numerous and can be seen from the road but approach cautiously (preferably view from behind roadside cover) and avoid disturbing birds. At Ballyduff, take either the north or south road along the Blackwater to the Cork border; the south road is often best but better views of the swans can be had from the north road if they are near the river bank.

General details - the Blackwater valley and callows:

The Blackwater river is typical of many Munster rivers in that for most of its length it runs along a west-east axis through a Carboniferous limestone valley, draining much of Kerry, Cork and Waterford, before turning abruptly southwards and discharging to the sea through an Old Red Sandstone fold on the Cork-Waterford border. The soluble nature of the limestone till, east of Fermoy and in particular between Ballyduff and Lismore, has resulted in a low-lying river plain, the Blackwater Callows, which, when flooded in winter attracts internationally numbers of Black-tailed Godwits and many dabbling duck. There are well-developed birch and oak woodlands in the tributary valleys of the Blackwater around Lismore and south of Cappoquin, on both sides of the estuary, with their associated plant and animal communities. Near the mouth of the estuary, the mudflats at Ballynatray and Kinsalebeg support locally important concentrations of wintering shorebirds (see separate **site-account**). The Blackwater Valley from Ferry Point to Ballyduff is one of the most ecologically important areas in Waterford and is, without doubt, part of the hidden Ireland, with a multitude of birding opportunities.

Further details:

The low-lying fields along the Blackwater, between Lismore and the Cork border, are spectacular when flooded in winter, with dense flocks of Wigeon, Teal and Black-tailed Godwits, difficult to count but definitely an ornithological highlight in the Waterford area. Large numbers of Bewick's Swans formerly occurred, but the species is scarce or absent nowadays. Whooper Swan is now the main species, with 400 or more on occasion. Much of the Callows is a Wildfowl Sanctuary and the birds can be viewed (with care) from the road overlooking the river. The main wildfowl concentration in winter is from the golf course just west of Lismore to just before Ballyduff further west. However, the main concentration of Whooper Swans is usually west of Ballyduff. Keep an eye out for colour-ringed Whoopers.

Also recorded on the Callows, in smaller numbers, are a range of other wetland species, including Shoveler and Pintail, all the raptor species and, at times in winter, hundreds of Redwing and Fieldfare. The actual number of birds present on the Callows often depends on climatic conditions and water levels. In freezing conditions, many of the Wigeon and waders, unable to feed, will forsake the fields for the coastal wetlands. In addition, if the Callows are not flooded, the area is likely to be deserted by most waterfowl, except the swans.

In summer, there are fewer birds about, but Mute Swan, Mallard, Kingfisher and Grey Wagtail should be present and breeding along the river, with Green and Common Sandpiper likely from July onwards. Sand Martins also breed along the sandy banks of the Blackwater west of Ballyduff, and there is a Cormorant tree roost near here too with birds present all year round. The extensive woodlands along the Blackwater support diverse breeding bird communities in summer but little is known of the species present or their densities. Jays are common (if difficult to see) and good numbers of Siskin and Woodcock are likely, at least in winter. A visit to these woodlands in spring or summer should produce a good variety of bird species, some possibly scarce elsewhere in Waterford.

Coolfin / Portnascully

Grid reference: S41/S51 - S4814 (Coolfin) east to S5012 (Portnascully)

Ordnance Survey Discovery map: # 75

Habitat: River Suir, adjacent pasture and marshes.

Main interest: Wintering Greylag Geese and other wildfowl.

Regular/annual: Greylag Goose, Whooper Swan, Little Egret, White-fronted Goose, Teal, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Snipe, Green Sandpiper, Stonechat, winter thrushes.

Scarcer species & rarities: Barnacle Goose, Pink-footed Goose, Green-winged Teal.

Access: From Waterford City, turn right for Portlaw beyond Kilmeadan on the main Waterford-Cork road, about 11 km out. Five km further on, veer right for Carrick-on-Suir (left for Portlaw) and the Coolfin fields are on the right hand side of the road, just over the first bridge. However, relatively few birds use Coolfin itself nowadays, perhaps reflecting more intensive grazing by sheep and cattle. Preferably, first stop at the farm gateway about a mile further east of Coolfin, and scan the river and the fields at Portnascully on the Kilkenny side. Many of the Greylag Geese feed at Portnascully nowadays, or on in the fields near Derrigal cross-roads, on the Waterford side, immediately east of Coolfin. Also check the tributaries at each end of Coolfin for duck and other species.

Further details:

The Coolfin/Portnascully area holds one of the largest wintering flocks of Greylag Geese in Ireland. From late October to early April, 200-400 birds are regular here, with over 600 on occasion. If birds are present on the Waterford side, on the Coolfin and Derrigal marshes and fields, good views can often be had from the roadside, even from a car-window. Apart from Greylags, Greenland White-fronted Geese occur in some winters, and there are also several records of Barnacle and Pink-footed Geese. Whooper Swans also winter, but Bewick's Swan is much less frequent. Since the early 1990s, Portnascully, on the Kilkenny shore, has often held most of the Greylags, and, more recently, other fields on the Kilkenny side have held feeding geese. Unfortunately, this has made it more difficult to obtain good views or complete counts. Some Greylags also feed in fields near **Tibberoughney Bog**, further upriver (see site-account).

Good numbers of Lapwing and Curlew are usually present, and Golden Plover are fairly regular in late autumn and winter. Dozens of Snipe can be flushed from the riverside fields east of the reserve, and small numbers of Woodcock feed at night. Green Sandpipers probably winter annually, and are best seen at the tributaries at Clodiagh Bridge and Derrigal cross-roads. Duck species are usually confined to the River Suir and its tributaries, and are best viewed from the Waterford side shore opposite Portnascully, although complete counts are difficult. Teal are the main species, but Tufted Duck, Goldeneye, Mallard, Pochard and even Green-winged Teal, Scaup and Shelduck have occurred. Clodiagh Bridge will usually provide good views of a few Teal. This can also be a good spot for Kingfisher, and several warbler species are usually present in summer. Notable passerines in winter include Long-tailed Tit, which are regular along the roadside hedges, and the winter thrushes (Fieldfare and Redwing).

Not far east of Coolfin, Pouldrew, or Stonehouse Lake, usually holds a few Mallard and Teal in winter. Treecreepers are regular, and in summer Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps; Mute Swans also breed. Blackcaps, Jays and a range of other passerine species also breed in the woodlands above Coolfin and around Portlaw. The nationally important oakwoods near Portlaw, including Curraghmore Estate, are semi-natural and are regenerating freely; there are distinctive bird species present and the stream through the estate holds several pairs of Dipper. Another prominent breeding species in the Portlaw woods is Woodcock, with its conspicuous 'roding' flight at dusk. Long-eared Owls also breed, among conifers, and are best located by listening for the distinctive 'rusty hinge' calls of chicks on calm nights in June.

Fenor Bog Nature Reserve

Grid reference: S50 - S533015

Ordnance Survey Discovery map: # 75

Habitat: Regenerating valley fen, formerly a raised bog where turf was cut. Owned by the Irish Peatland Conservation

Council, in association with the Moin Fhionnurach Development Association, and designated as Waterford's first National Nature Reserve in 2004.

Main interest: Typical birds of open country and bogland.

Regular/annual: Breeding Snipe, Cuckoo, Stonechat, warblers, Reed Bunting; Long-eared & Barn Owls occur.

Scarcer species & rarities: Short-eared Owl.

Website links:

<http://www.ipcc.ie/sitefenor.html>

<http://www.ipcc.ie/sitefenor2.html>

<http://www.ipcc.ie/sitefenornnr.html>

Access: Fenor Bog is located 16 km south-southwest of Waterford City in the village of Fenor. It is just 5 km west of Tramore town: take a sharp right at Fenor village, on the Dungarvan coast-road, and site is on the left just beyond the church). Good access to the habitat itself is provided by a constructed boardwalk.

Map: See <http://www.ipcc.ie/sitefenor.html>

Fiddown / Tibberoughney

Grid reference: S41/S42 – S4619 west to S4321

Ordnance Survey Discovery map: #75

Habitat: River Suir, wooded island, riverside marshes and pasture.

Typical birds: Wintering Teal, Cormorant, Greylag Goose, Whooper Swan, Golden Plover; resident Water Rail, Long-tailed Tit, breeding Blackcap.

Scarcer species: Garden Warbler, wintering Common Sandpiper.

Access: From Coolfin (see site-account), Fiddown Bridge is just a few km to the north-west, on the Carrick-on-Suir road. From Carrick-on-Suir, take the Waterford road and cross the bridge at Fiddown near the oil storage depot. The roads to (or from) Carrickbeg can also offer good views of the Suir. The best vantage points (especially when checking for Greylag Geese at Tibberoughney) are reached by taking a left turn, steeply uphill, just west of Fiddown Bridge on the Waterford side, then turning right at the T-junction at the top of the hill and stopping at various points .

In winter, good numbers of Cormorants and duck are usually present on the River Suir here, or slightly up- or down-river from the bridge. Up to several hundred Teal are regularly present, and Tufted Duck and Goldeneye were formerly fairly regular. In recent winters, part of the Greylag Geese and Whooper Swan flocks that formerly wintered mainly at Coolfin/Portnascully have grazed in fields near Tibberoughney Bog, on the Kilkenny shore. The low-lying island at Fiddown Bridge, immediately inside the Co Kilkenny border, is densely vegetated with reeds, willows and other scrub. The island is of interest botanically and for its variety of breeding birds, including Water Rail and warblers. Several pairs of Blackcaps breed on the island and along the adjacent Kilkenny and Waterford banks of the Suir; Garden Warbler have occasionally been recorded, and may have bred in the past.

Kilmeaden pools

Grid reference: S50 - S5108

Ordnance Survey Discovery map: # 75

Habitat: Constructed wetland with settling ponds and marsh habitat.

Main interest: Waterfowl and waders.

Regular/annual: Green Sandpiper, Water Rail.

Scarcer species & rarities: Garganey, Hen Harrier, Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Little Gull, *Water Pipit.

Access: Approaching from Waterford city on the main Cork road, turn left at the Sweep junction just before Kilmeaden village, then take the first right-turn and continue on for 1 km or less; where power-lines cross the road, a small access road to the right leads to the site.

Further details:

These constructed wetlands were designed to treat creamery effluent, and provide a series of pools, some of which may be flooded, others of which may have lower levels (providing exposed mud), at any one time. Large numbers of Moorhen are resident, and Water Rails also occur in the marshes. A good mix of dabbling duck (including Shoveler) occurs in winter, and Garganey has occurred as a migrant. Large numbers of Snipe occur in winter, and Green Sandpiper may occur in almost any month. Passage waders have included Ruff and Wood Sandpiper, and there is potential for rare species. Sedge Warblers breed in the marsh habitat here, and small numbers of Chiffchaffs winter. Water Pipits have occurred in winters 2003/2004 and 2004/2005, up to two birds each winter, and the marsh habitat here seems to be ideal for the species. A few Choughs are occasionally recorded feeding nearby (c.10 km inland).

Knockaderry Reservoir

Grid reference: S40 - S4906

Ordnance Survey Discovery map: # 75

Habitat: Natural lake, with areas of marsh; coniferous woodland along margins.

Main interest: Waterfowl; passage waders if water-levels low in autumn.

Regular/annual: Whooper Swan, diving and dabbling ducks.

Scarcer species & rarities: Red-necked Grebe, Green-winged Teal (1982), Gadwall, Smew (1987), Ruddy Duck (1982), Pectoral Sandpiper (1984 & 2004), Baird's Sandpiper (1984), Ruff, Green Sandpiper, Firecrest (1980/81).

Highlights: Lesser Scaup (Nov 1999) - originally seen at Ballyshunock Reservoir.

Access: When approaching from Waterford, turn left and down the hill at the Sweep petrol station, about 10 km out on the main Waterford-Cork road at Adamstown. At the end of the hill turn off right (instead of continuing on for Kill and Bunmahon) and on up that hill. At the top, veer left (signposted for Knockaderry Reservoir) and continue for 1.4 km. Go right here (signposted "Knockaderry Fishery") and down to the lake. This is the most direct route. Alternatively, from Ballyshunock Reservoir, turn left at Carroll's Cross on the main Waterford-Dungarvan road and then right a few metres further on. Continue for exactly 3.5 km and take a sharp left at this (veer right for Kill/Ballinlough). Follow this narrow twisting road, uphill and downhill, for 4.8 km, then turn right and 1.3 km further on (overlooking the lakes) turn left down to lake.

Further details:

Knockaderry is a natural lake, but it has supplied water to Waterford city since 1887. There is also trout fishing (from boats) here. Access is restricted but there is usually little need to walk around either lake as birdwatching can be done from the road (though a telescope is useful). The reservoir is slightly more awkward to get to than Ballyshunock, but is well worth a visit.

A similar range of waterfowl species to Ballyshunock is present in winter, and some species are most easily seen in the sheltered backwater at the west side of the lake, viewable from the road. In the late 1980s, this small lake, separated from the main lake by a roadway, became densely vegetated, particularly in summer. Whooper Swan, Wigeon, and Teal numbers can be higher here than on the other lakes, reflecting the prolific aquatic plant growth. Diving ducks (Pochard and Tufted Duck) feed mainly on the large lake, and often a few Goldeneye. Odd visitors have included Red-necked Grebe, Smew, Green-winged Teal and Ruddy Duck.

Fewer wintering waders occur than at Ballyshunock, but there have been January records of Woodcock and Green Sandpiper, with occasional autumn records of Green and Common Sandpipers, Ruff and Greenshank. In some years, water levels have fallen sufficiently to expose large areas of mud by the autumn - in such conditions, Baird's Sandpiper and two Pectoral Sandpipers were found in September 1984, and another Pectoral Sandpiper in October 2004.

Breeding species at Knockaderry include Little Grebe, Mute Swan and Mallard; Tufted Duck has bred in the past. Dippers and Grey Wagtails nest at the outflow stream at the north-east side of the lake and can sometimes be seen from the roadside. In the tall conifers by the lake, Long-eared Owls have bred. Good numbers of warblers also breed, and Chiffchaffs occasionally overwinter. A Firecrest apparently over-wintered from at least December to March of 1980/81.

Little Island

Grid reference: S61 - S6411

Ordnance Survey Discovery map: # 76

Habitat: Island and adjacent banks of River Suir, with mudflats, saltmarsh and woodland.

Main interest: Heronry; wintering waders & duck; resident passerines.

Typical birds: Grey Heron (breeding), Little Egret, Wigeon, Greenshank, Common Sandpiper and commoner waders, Kingfisher, Jay.

Scarcer species: Little Stint, Green Sandpiper.

Access: The riverbank opposite the south-west shore of Little Island can be reached by taking the Dunmore East road near the Tower Hotel in Waterford City, and then taking a left turn after Waterford Regional Hospital at Ardkeen, just beyond Powerscourt housing estate. This leads to the slipway and ferrypoint (grid ref S639110). Alternatively, take a left at the first roundabout before the Hospital for a viewpoint (grid ref S636114) overlooking the west side of the island. More distant views are possible of the southern tip of the island from several points further east along the main Dunmore road, and of the east side from the Coillte forest above Cheekpoint (viewpoint marked (P) on Discovery map, grid ref S676131). The river channels around the island can also be viewed from the Co Kilkenny side of the River Suir.

Further details: The Island, over 170 hectares in extent, is downriver from Waterford City, and now boasts an exclusive hotel set in deciduous woodland, with a range of facilities for the wealthy visitor. One of the largest Heronries in County Waterford is on Little Island, and dozens of Grey Herons can sometimes be seen along the Suir between here and the City, usually with a few Little Egrets nowadays. There is a small but ornithologically important marshy area at the eastern tip of the Island which is home to several wader species from August on, mainly Curlew, Redshank and Greenshank, though Black-tailed & Bar-tailed Godwits have also been recorded. The river bank near the Island ferry can also be a good spot for Common Sandpiper, which probably winter here regularly, and the channel opposite is good for Cormorants. Red-breasted Mergansers are frequently seen on the Suir near the eastern end of the Island, and dozens of Teal and Wigeon winter. A few hundred Dunlin usually winter north or east of the island, along the Suir as far as Waterford port, along with up to several thousand Lapwing. With such extensive woodlands, Little Island is home to a range of passerine species, including Jays. The Island is also an important roosting area for thousands of Rooks and Jackdaws.