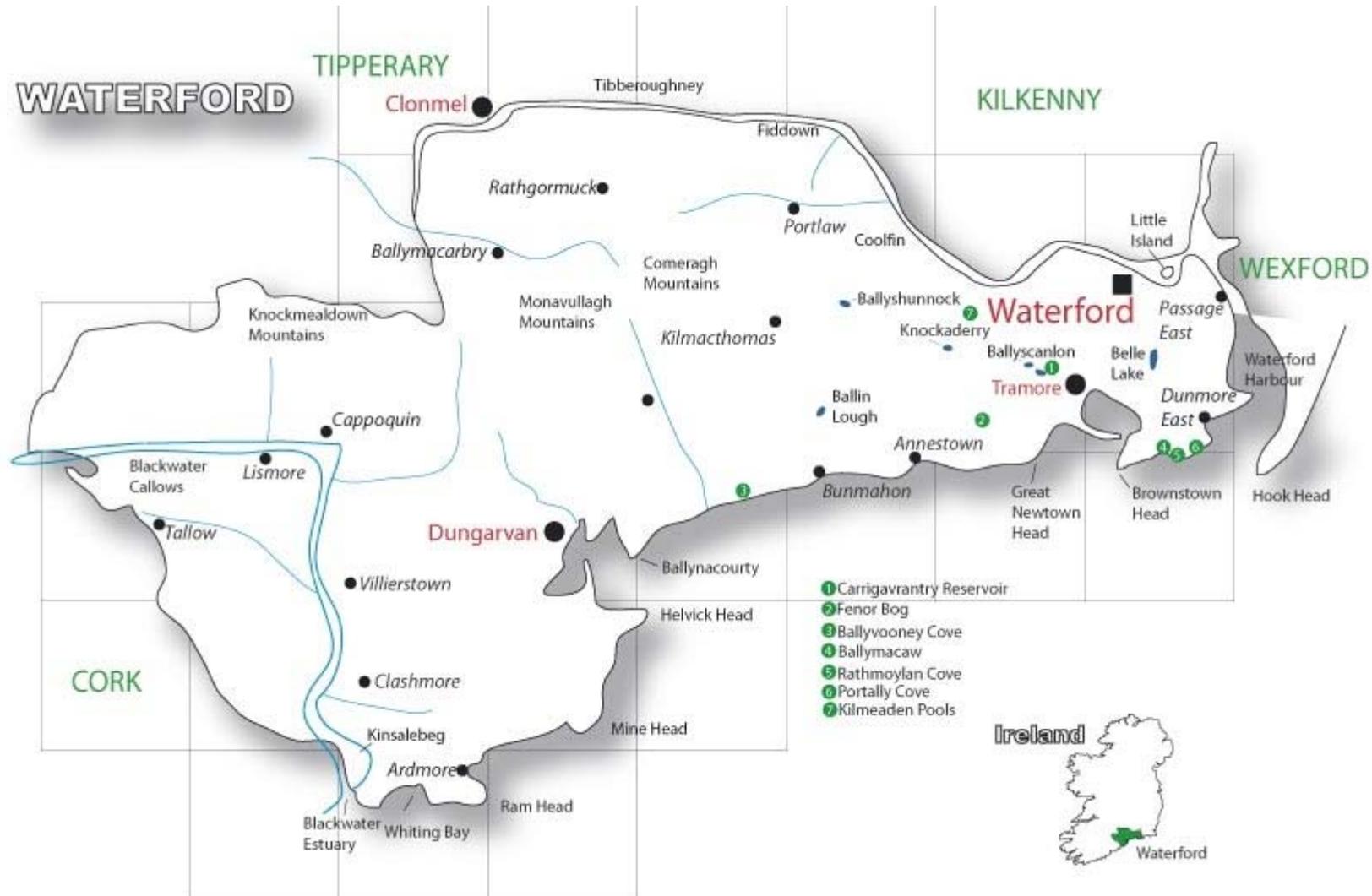


Guide to birdwatching sites in Co Waterford



Co Waterford has a wide range of habitats, including four major estuaries, long stretches of sea-cliff, freshwater lakes and marshes, extensive upland areas, and coastal headlands and valleys. These support large winter and passage populations of wetland birds, breeding populations of seabirds, and provide good watch-points for landbird and seabird migrants. Even in mid-winter, it is possible (with effort) to see 100 species or more in a day. In common with much of Ireland, breeding landbird species are rather restricted, but there are good populations of coastal-breeding Choughs, and Nightjar probably breeds regularly in the upland areas. In aquatic habitats, Waterford has recently been colonized by breeding Reed Warblers and Little Egrets, and the county is currently the Irish stronghold for nesting egrets. Waterford's position on the south coast of Ireland helps increase chances of rarities from the south, east and west, though the county is less well positioned (and less well covered) than adjacent Cork and Wexford. Nevertheless, Waterford can be productive for, in particular, rarer passerines, seabirds and waterfowl, although American waders have, to date, been unaccountably scarce. Even the best-watched locations, such as Dungarvan and Brownstown Head, could benefit from increased coverage. On top of this, there are many poorly covered coastal valleys and headlands that have great further potential for American or Asiatic vagrants, to add to the county's existing tally of such species (including Ireland's first Yellow Warbler).

Brief details of the main sites are provided below.

General note on site-access: Whenever in doubt, please always use public roads and other obvious rights-of-way to view or gain access to sites described below. Always request permission from local landowners, or check with local observers, if you are in any doubt (i.e. before attempting to enter fenced agricultural land, private gardens or other private sites). For most of the sites described, public access- or viewing-points will be available, but fuller coverage may require greater access. Where permission has been sought in the past, landowners in Co Waterford have generally been very helpful - please do not jeopardize this.

Summary list

Annestown Bog (Ordnance Survey 10-km grid-squares X59/S50 - site midpoint c.S5000):

Coastal reedbed and scrub habitat with abundant nesting and passage warblers, especially Sedge Warbler; also Water Rails, and nearby cliffs hold nesting Choughs and seabirds.

Ardmore Head & Bay (X17/X27 - c.X1977):

Landbird migrant site (especially Ardmore Head), with records of rarities including Red-eyed Vireo. Also a large Kittiwake colony at Ram Head; and Ardmore Bay is worth checking for rarer waterfowl (including Black-throated Diver).

Ballinlough (S40 - S4403)

Freshwater lake with regular Whooper Swans, small numbers of duck.

Ballymacaw (X69 - c.X6498):

A well-wooded coastal glen, productive for passerine migrants, with rarity records including Melodious Warbler; some breeding seabirds.

Ballyscanlan Lake & Carrigavrantry Reservoir (S50 - c.S5403):

Small numbers of wintering duck, and adjacent conifer plantations have held Crossbills in the past.

Ballyshunnock Reservoir (S40 - c.S4509):

Along with Knockaderry Reservoir, the best lake site in Waterford, with small but varied breeding, wintering and passage populations of aquatic birds. Rarities have included Lesser Scaup, several Ring-necked Ducks and Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

Ballyvooney Cove (X39 - X3897):

Has held one or two Surf Scoters regularly in recent winter, with small numbers of Common Scoter and divers; also, breeding seabirds.

Belle Lake (S60 - S6604):

Small numbers of wintering duck, but the reedbed supports good breeding and passage populations of Sedge Warblers, plus some Reed Warblers.

Blackwater Callows (R90/S00 - c.S0098):

The main wintering site for Whooper Swans in Waterford, with large numbers of Wigeon and Black-tailed Godwits wintering in flooded fields. Occasional rarities such as Green-winged Teal.

Brownstown Head (X69 - c.X6197):

The most productive Waterford site for migrant and vagrant landbirds, which have included Scops Owl, Yellow & Blackpoll Warblers, Northern Parula, Red-eyed Vireo, Greenish, Bonelli's & Pallas's Warblers. Also a good seawatch point, though less so than Helvick Head.

Clonea & Ballynacourty Point (X39 - c.X3193):

Extensive, east-facing beaches & rocky coastline, with typical open-shoreline waders on passage and in winter, with occasional rarities such as Lesser Yellowlegs or Semipalmated Sandpiper. Waterford's best site for terns, which have included White-winged Black tern. Also an excellent site for divers and, on occasion, landbird migrants (records include Woodchat & Red-backed Shrikes).

Comeragh & Monavullagh Mountains

Although birds can be thin on the ground, they include small numbers of breeding Red Grouse, possibly also Ring Ouzel, and, in adjacent conifer plantations, Crossbills and occasionally Nightjar.

Coolfin / Portnascully (S41/S51 - c.S4914):

Large numbers of Greylag Geese winter along the River Suir here, often visible from the roadside and occasionally including scarcer species like Pink-footed or Barnacle Goose. Green Sandpiper winter regularly.

Dungarvan (X29/X28 - c.X2791):

Extensive areas of mudflat and the open bay support Waterford's largest waterfowl populations, including high totals of Brent Geese, Shelduck, Bar-tailed & Black-tailed Godwits, among others. This is the best site for rarer waterbirds in the county, with rarer grebes and gulls a specialty. The many rarities recorded here include Squacco Heron, Ivory & Bonaparte's Gulls, Forster's & Whiskered Terns and (in Dungarvan town) Lesser Grey Shrike.

Dunmore East (S60/X69 - c.S6900):

Best known for its Kittiwake colonies viewable at close range; also a good site for scarcer gulls, and once held Europe's first Indian House Crow. Potentially a good spot for migrant landbirds.

East Waterford coast

Breeding seabirds occur at low densities along all the cliffs from Creadan Head (see **Waterford Harbour**) west to Benlea (just east of **Brownstown Head**), with the largest colonies at **Dunmore East** (mainly Kittiwakes). Landbird migrant sites are dominated by Brownstown Head, but also include the coves at **Ballymacaw**, **Rathmoylan** and **Portally**. The estuaries and open bays of Waterford Harbour and **Tramore** form the eastern and western boundaries of this stretch of coast.

Fenor Bog (S50 - S533015):

Nature reserve with typical breeding birds of open country and bogland, including Cuckoo and Snipe.

Fiddown/Tibberoughney (S41/S42 - c.S4620)

River Suir, wooded island, and adjacent marshes & pasture, with wintering Greylag Geese & large numbers of Teal, also breeding passerines including Blackcap.

Helvick Head (X38 - c.X3189):

Waterford's best seawatch point, with records including Fea's/Zino's Petrel and good numbers of rarer shearwaters. An excellent site for landbird migrants and vagrants, which have included Red-footed Falcon, Alpine Swift, and Radde's & Pallas's Warblers. Also the largest seabird colony in the county.

Kilmeaden Pools (S50 - S5108):

Constructed wetland site with lagoons & marsh habitat, good for duck (Garganey has occurred), passage waders (regular Green Sandpiper) and has had up to 2 Water Pipits in winters 2003/2004 and 2004/2005.

Kinsalebeg & Blackwater Estuary (X17/X18/X08 - c.X1179)

Along the Cork/Waterford border, the estuary holds good numbers of Black-tailed Godwits, among other species, and has produced rarities including Spotted Sandpiper and Baird's Sandpiper.

Knockaderry Reservoir (S40 - c.S4906):

Wintering duck and Whooper Swans, passage waders, with rarity records including Lesser Scaup, Smew and Baird's Sandpiper.

Knockmealdown Mountains

A similar mix of species, and potential, to the Comeraghs, including Red Grouse and occasional Nightjars.

Little Island (S61 - c.S6411):

Estuarine and woodland site close to Waterford city, with a good mix of species, including regular wintering Common Sandpipers.

Mid-Waterford coast

The coastline from the west side of **Tramore Bay**, west as far as Ballyvoyle Head (near **Clonea**), has extensive cliffs & rock islets along most of its length, with nesting Choughs & seabirds - Fulmar, Cormorant, Shag, large gulls, Black Guillemot and, west of Stradbally, Guillemot & Razorbill. Inlets and beaches at Newtown Cove, Garrarus, Kilfarrassy, **Annestown**, Boatstrand, Kilmurrin, Bunmahon, Ballydwan, **Ballyvooney**, Stradbally and Ballyvoyle provide good access to the cliffs, and are also worth checking for divers, seaduck and migrant landbirds.

Mine Head area (X28 - c.X2882):

An under-watched area, with a large amount of suitable habitat for landbird migrants in sheltered coastal valleys, including those at Ballycurreen, Ballynamona, Hackettstown (which has had Red-eyed Vireo), Ballymacart (which has had Honey Buzzard) and Paulsworth. Great potential for further rarities. Also seabird colonies.

Portally Cove (X69 - c.X6798):

Small Kittiwake colony; also landbird migrants, with rarity potential.

Rathmoylan (X69 - c.X6598):

Coastal migrant site, with rarity records including Melodious Warbler; some breeding seabirds.

Tramore Bay & Backstrand (S50/S60/X59/X69 - c. S6000):

The estuarine Backstrand supports large numbers of wintering Brent Geese, Black-tailed Godwits and Grey Plover, among a good diversity of other waterfowl and occasional rarities (which have included Black-winged Stilt). The outer Bay can hold good numbers of divers and Common Scoter.

Upland areas (general):

The **Knockmealdown Mountains** and **Comeragh & Monavullagh Mountains** (see also specific site-accounts) hold typical upland breeding birds, and scarcer species include Crossbill and Nightjar in adjacent forests.

Waterford Harbour (S60/S70 - c.S7008):

Estuarine site stretching from Cheekpoint south to Creadan Head, plus open sea at harbour-mouth; less impressive waterfowl numbers than other county sites but include small numbers of Brent Geese, scarcer gulls; some breeding seabirds.

West Waterford coast

Bordered by **Dungarvan** at the east and Youghal Harbour & the **Blackwater estuary** at the west, the coastline from **Helvick Head** west to Ferry Point includes steep cliffs along much of its length (notably at Helvick, **Mine Head** and **Ram Head**). These hold good seabird colonies, especially Helvick (up to 9 species) and Ram (Kittiwakes). There are also stretches of lower-lying coastline (notably at **Ardmore** and Whiting Bay), good for open-shore waders and waterfowl, and well-vegetated headlands & valleys (notably Ardmore, Helvick, **Hackettstown & Ballymacart**), good for landbird migrants.