



A Moving Story – Dublin Bay Birds Project needs your help!

Since the first colour ring was fitted as part of the Dublin Bay Birds Project on the 19th October, 2012, we've been doggedly trying to get as many re-sightings of these birds as possible. Nearly three years later, we've fitted many more rings and are still on the hunt for these colourful individuals. We're learning lots about these birds, both locally and internationally, but equally, new questions are being raised.

To date, 396 waders have been colour-ringed with a breakdown of 262 Oystercatchers, 99 Bar-tailed Godwits and 35 Redshanks. Colour-ringing is a fantastic tool for us, as it allows us to generate lots of data on individual birds without the need to recapture them – we can easily identify each bird according to the inscription on its brightly coloured rings.

There is no question that reading the rings (and submitted them!) is time well spent, and it is very enjoyable too. Time spent in the wilds of the Dublin coast, with the bustle of the city behind you is surely always time well spent. The thrill of successfully “getting” the rings starts to become addictive over time. You start to become familiar with regular individuals at their haunts, and look forward to their return from breeding areas in Scotland and Iceland.

Come spring, most of our colour-ringed birds will leave Dublin and indeed the country altogether, and this is when it really gets exciting. We open our emails each morning with huge anticipation, hoping for messages with foreign names from far-flung places bringing news of “our” birds. We have had re-sightings from Scotland, Iceland,

Picture 1. Colour-ringed Bar-tailed Godwits on Dublin Bay.

Photo: John Fox.

Norway and the Faroe Islands so far. It's always brilliant to get a foreign re-sighting, but it's even better to connect with that bird back on Irish soil (or sand!) in the autumn.

We would love to see more birders and nature enthusiasts out keeping an eye on our birds and piecing their stories together. Every single re-sighting we receive adds to our ever-growing dataset, tells us more about how the birds are using their winter home and informs us on how we can conserve it.

If you are interested in trying out some ring-reading and hearing more about the Dublin Bay Birds Project, why not come along to our ring reading day at Bull Island on Saturday, October 17th? On the day we will be on hand, with experienced ring-readers, to introduce you to ring-reading, and we will take to the coast to scrutinise the local flocks for ringed birds. It's a fantastic time of year to get out and see the huge numbers of waterbirds that use Dublin Bay.

What: Dublin Bay Ring Reading Day.

Where: meeting at the Bull Island Visitor Centre.

When: Saturday, October 17th @10am.

What to bring: Binoculars and telescope (if you have some), Wellies, suitable clothing and some lunch.

Ricky Whelan,
BirdWatch Ireland's Dublin Bay Birds
Project Assistant
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Picture 2 (top). Oystercatchers.

Small roosting groups of Oystercatchers are always worth checking with a scope for colour rings, this small group on Sandymount Strand had 3 colour-ringed birds amongst them.

Picture 3 (above). Redshanks.

It can be tricky to read rings on feeding groups of Redshank, they move fast and often rings can be obstructed by water and body feathers also. Here Redshank “AN” can clearly be read from this very clear photo which demonstrates how useful high-powered cameras can be as an aid to ring reading.

Photos: John Fox.