

Western Ireland

Saturday 24 - Saturday 31 May 2008

Leaders:

Liz Charter
Rebecca Nason

Introduction

Thank you all for making the 2008 Western Ireland trip such a successful and enjoyable experience this year, the West coast of Ireland and the Aran Islands never fails to reward us with botanical and birding highlights and this year was certainly no exception! We thoroughly enjoyed your good company and humour throughout the week and hope to see you all again on trips with us in the not-too-distant future. Please do not hesitate to contact us again.

Rebecca Nason and Liz Charter - June 2008.

Diary

Saturday 24 May

Meet at Shannon Airport, excursion to Shannon Lagoon, Shannon Airport, Lindowarna and Kincora House B&B.

Weather: overcast, warm.

The two leaders met the first arrivals at Shannon Airport, Bridget who had arrived the day before and then Lisa and Peter just in from Chicago. After light refreshments and coffee in the cafe upstairs we headed out with scopes across the airport grounds, past a golf course and on to the Shannon Lagoon for our first spot of birding! Here we had 2 pairs of **Stonechat**, 3+ **Sedge Warbler**, a **Reed Warbler**, **Dunnock**, **Barn Swallow**, **House Martin**, **Grey Heron**, **12 Black-tailed Godwits** and **70+ Dunlin**. Other species present included **20+ Black-headed Gulls**, **11 Shelduck**, **1 Cormorant**, several vocal **Meadow Pipits** and a distant **Ringed Plover**. Plants of note along the track included **Great Pond Sedge**, **Bush Vetch**, **Sea Clubrush**, **Ragged Robin**, **Carnation Sedge** and **False Fox Sedge**. Patches of attractive **Cottongrass** and **Red Clover** were also noted.

We then, with time allowing before the Gatwick flight brought the rest of the group into Shannon, headed out to the famous Craggaunowen, a site full of reconstructions of 4th and 5th century Irish farm houses, a beautiful lake and lake dwelling called a 'crannog', a ring fort and the famous 'Brendan' boat (the boat Tim Severin built and sailed to America, re-enacting the voyage of St Brendan – who is reputed to have discovered America before Columbus). This is a site not to be missed so was also on the agenda at the end of our trip to include those who were not yet in from Gatwick! On the lake we saw a **Little Grebe** and **Large Red** and **Common Blue Damselflies**. A lovely **Robin's** nest was found on the wall near the steps to the Lake containing several hungry large chicks we could all easily see. The adult birds were extremely confiding as we stood at the Lake edge and watched them collecting food for their brood. During a woodland walk on-site, we saw our first **Goldcrest**, **Blackbirds**, **Chaffinches**, **Great Tit**, **Blue Tit** and a family of **Long-tailed Tits** with fledged young. Our first butterfly was a **Speckled Wood**. The enclosure with peculiar looking 'Wild Boar' asleep in the shade was surrounded by a lot of **Rooks** and **Magpies**, two species abundant in this part of Ireland! We also noted around the lake, **Bog Bean**, **Water Violet**, **Ivy-leaved** and **Common Duckweed**, **Water Mint** and **Yellow Flag Iris**. Just before we departed, we noticed a **Great Tit** on the nest within a dry stone wall.

We soon made our way back to Shannon Airport and met our driver Bill. The delayed flight from Gatwick eventually arrived and we were all soon united and headed off on the coach towards Kincora House Hotel approximately an hour away in Lisdoonvarna. We arrived at 7.30pm to a warm welcome from Doreen and her husband. After being allocated our rooms and getting ourselves settled, we met in the bar for a pre-dinner drink (great Guinness!!) before taking our seat by a warming peat fire for a special homemade Irish Stew and Apple Pie. We had a quick meeting before we retired to our rooms to recover from the days travelling.



Mountain Avens

Sunday 25 May

Kilfenora, Cahermacnaughton (fort), Ballyvaughan (Monks Pub), Corcomroe Abbey, Abbey Hill, Whitethorn Centre.

Weather: Overcast, breezy with sunny spells. More overcast by pm.

Our first pre-breakfast walk of the trip saw **Barn Swallows** hunting overhead as we stepped out into the cold morning air and a **Blackcap** sang in a nearby thicket. We walked along the road noting **Magpies, House Sparrows** and **Jackdaws** before heading down a path towards the river bordered by dense scrub and woodland, an area called Rathbaun Park. Here we had our first Irish race of '**Coal Tit**'. As we reached the river edge and the sulphurous little Spring adjacent to it, several of us noted our first '**Dipper**' also of the special 'Irish Race' as it headed swiftly down stream just above the water! Two great species on our first morning!

After a hearty Irish Breakfast we headed out to Kilfenora to view some very impressive 12th century tall Celtic stone crosses and an old cathedral. After enjoying a wonder through the churchyard and watching nesting **Jackdaws** amongst the **Wall Pennywort** clad church remains, we entered the impressive new Burren Centre. Here we were shown an audio visual of 'The Burren' and looked around the shops and adjoining 'Burren' exhibition rooms, full of visual stimulus for kids, detailed maps of the area and many informative interpretation boards about the geology, nature and history of the area before driving to Cahermacnaughton, a small fort that used to be a Medieval Law School in the 17th Century. Here we saw **Irish Saxifrage, Rustyback Ferns** and a **Mistle Thrush**.



12th Century Celtic High Cross. Kilfenora.

Our next port of call was Ballyvaughan where we were due at the Monk's Pub for lunch. On the way we stopped briefly on Corkscrew Hill where we had amazing views of Galway Bay. **Hooded Crows** picked for food in the breeze along the seawall as we made our way in to this attractive pub and were soon all tucking into their fabulous 'Seafood Chowder' and soda bread.

After lunch we visited Corcomroe Abbey briefly and after hearing **Cuckoo** and seeing our first **Greenfinches** around the ruins, we headed to the botanically rich Abbey Hill site for our first proper scout around prime calcareous grassland habitat. Fabulous **Spring Gentians** and **Early Purple Orchids** were everywhere. A tiny **Moonwort** was spotted along with many **Cowslips**, over **Dense-flowered Orchids (Irish Orchid)** and buds of **Butterfly Orchids**. **Bloody Cranesbill** was plentiful along the hillside. Very attractive **Mountain Everlasting** was out in flower, **Common Twayblade**. **Common Milkwort**, **Heath-spotted Orchid**, **Lambs Lettuce** and **Wall Lettuce** were also noted amongst the many species we recorded at this site.

Our last stop was a brief one to grounds of the Whitethorn Centre where we scoped **6+ Common Seals** out on the rocks before departing back to Kincora House for refreshment, dinner and the evening log.

Monday 26 May

Poulnabrone Dolmen, Burren Perfumery, Keelhilla Reserve NNR, Loch Bunny, Mullach Mor, Leamangh Castle.

Weather: Windy, overcast but with bright and sunny spells. More sunshine pm.

Our early morning walk provided us again with distant but longer views of the Irish **Dipper** out on rocks further downstream. A smart **Grey Wagtail** and a **Spotted Flycatcher** were also seen. After breakfast we visited Poulnabrone, the site of Ireland's most famous 'Dolmen' - an impressive structure, even more so without the crowds as we had arrived early! A smart **Pied Wagtail** greeted us in the car park upon arrival. The odd pair of **Linnet** flew overhead and several **Northern Wheatear** were present but keeping low in the strong breeze. A small pond provided us with our first **Common Frog**, as well as **Waterwort**, **Water Mint** and **Wall Rue**. **Many Skylark** and **Meadow Pipits** were singing high above us, several **Meadow Pipits** were doing their Parachute flight display in the wind.

Our next stop was the intoxicating 'Burren Perfumery' where heavenly smells were permeating from the Perfumery shop and the Cafe! After a good audio visual presentation, many of us soon found ourselves tucking into fresh organic Irish Scones and fresh cafeire coffee! Set in very attractive surroundings we walked some way up the track within the Perfumery grounds. **Willow Warbler** and **Chiffchaff** sang nearby, a male **Chaffinch** was seen and **Robins** were again plentiful. Along the track several interesting plants were noted, including **Mountain Avens**, **Common Cowwheat** and **Wood Sanicle**. We also saw a **Dingy Skipper**.

En route to Keelhilla Rebecca spotted several **Irish Hare** close by the roadside over a dry stone wall in an sparsely vegetated field. After a couple of desperate attempts to get Bill to stop the coach we were soon all enjoying close views outside the vehicle of one of these wonderful Irish mammals as it sculked down but stayed put for sometime before lopping off. We ate lunch en route to the Keelhilla site, which contained interesting wet and dry patches, we noted **Butterwort**, **Bog Myrtle**, **Yew** (very small!!), **Sundew** and two species of **Cottongrass** as well as the common limestone pavement species.



A typical 'Burren' Limestone Landscape.

A stop at 'Eagle Rock' produced a few good birds with **2 Peregrine** spotted hunting over the high ridge in front of us and a **Kestrel** made a brief appearance (and changed from a Merlin to a Kestrel pretty quickly!). **Sand Martins**, a **Stonechat** family and a **Raven** were also present here along with numerous **Skylarks**.

Loch Bunny was an attractive large calcareous lake bordered by interesting chalk loving flora. Here Liz found us species such as **Dropwort**, **Northern Bedstraw**, **Guelder Rose**, **Western Marsh Orchid** and **Lesser Butterfly Orchid** in bud! Birding was difficult here in the wind but with scopes a few species were noted including one distant **Common Sandpiper** on the far bank, several **Turnstone**, **Sandwich Tern**, a **Cormorant** and several **Common Shelduck** and **Mallard** out on the water as well as a pair of stunning **Great Crested Grebe**. Over 40 **Black-headed Gulls** were also seen feeding over the water. The best find however was the newly emerged **Emperor Moth** found in low grass here.



Irish Orchid.

Our last stop of the day was to Mullach Mor NNR. Here we noted **Stone Bramble, Helliborine leaves, Fen or Turlough Violet, Turlough Dandelion, Adder's Tongue Fern, Lesser Water Plantain and Shrubby Cinquefoil**. A pleasant walk along the road produced wonderful roadside flowers including over a hundred **Common Twayblades**, and smaller numbers of **Spring Sandwort, Tutsan, Fairy Flax, Yellowwort** and more **Irish or Dense-flowered Orchids**. A **Small Heath** (day flying moth not the butterfly) was also noted here as well as the beautiful **Rose chafer**.



Rose Chafer.

Tuesday 27 May

Poll Sallach, Fanore Sand Dunes, The Caher Valley, Bridies for Lunch, Black Head, Pinnacle Well, the Rine (to beach).

Weather: Overcast, windy and cool. Drizzle at times.

On our early morning walk we spotted more **Grey Wagtails** and a newly fledged **Juvenile Dipper** with an adult closeby. After our Irish breakfasts we headed for Poll Sallach on the west coast where the Burren meets the sea. Here we spilt into two groups briefly, Liz looking for plants amongst Limestone pavements and Rebecca standing at the shore noting any passing seabirds. Plants seen at this wonderful spot included **Rock Samphire, Hoary Rock Rose, Golden Rod, Spring Gentian, Maidenhair Fern and Rock Sea-lavender** amongst the solution hollows (kamenitzas) and grykes. The birders noted a winter plumaged **Great Northern Diver** just offshore and several **Rock Pipits** calling on the beach and heading up to nearby cliffs where they were clearly nesting. **4 Sandwich Tern** were seen and heard as they followed the coastline past us and **4+ Northern Gannets** were diving and feeding further offshore. We also noted a pair of **Black Guillemot**.

A little further up the coast we stopped again for a short scan for seabirds. Apart from the scope toppling over in the breeze, we had at least 4 pairs of Black Guillemot close in on the water below us, a lone **Northern Fulmar** flew passed us at high speed, **6 Great Black-backed Gulls, 3 Shag, 3 Cormorant** and **4 Herring Gulls** were also noted. Our next site was the Fanore Sand Dunes. Here we found **Sea Bindweed, Sand Sedge, Spring Gentians**, a good patch of **Dodder** and **Pyramidal Orchids** amongst the **Marram Grass**. A **House Martin** flew over the dunes and there were numerous **Meadow Pipits** and **Skylarks** again here. A pair of smart vocal **Stonechat's** clearly had young nearby and one **Ringed Plover** was calling from the beach below us. Over **20 Sandwich Terns** were seen feeding out at sea here.

Another successful stop before lunch was to the Caher Valley, or 'Khyber Pass' where we walked through a narrow gorge next to a small river. Here, we had one new special plant up our sleeves, the very impressive **Large-flowered Butterwort**, the one plant specimen was in it's prime! A Peregrine nest was visible up high on a rocky outcrop and a superb **Peregrine** in great light came in close over our heads giving superb views to all! A **Linnet** showed well, several **Stonechat** and a pair of **Grey Wagtails** were also noted and gave good views. **4 Sand Martin** flew overhead as we made our way back to the coach and on to friendly Bridies for lunch of soup and sandwiches in her kitchen.



The rare Large-flowered Butterwort.

After lunch we followed the coast round to Black Head. A seawatch here revealed 8 **Razorbill**, 2 **Common Guillemot**, 20+ **Kittiwakes** and up to five **Harbour porpoises** offshore! **Brookweed** was found here too. A short drive later we stopped at Pinnacle Well for **Fairy Foxglove** which was growing from the walls of the stone well and was clearly thriving as it was also spreading right up the hillside behind the well. A **Kestrel** hovered over the hillside.

Our last stop of the day was The Rine, following a long straight, peaceful track towards the sea. The wind had died down and the sun shone as we headed down towards the sand spit. A striking patch of **Wild Columbine** was seen not far from the track. **Stonechat** were abundant here and a **Common Cuckoo** flew over the track in front of us being chased by **Meadow Pipits**. **Hooded Crows** were noted as well as 2 **Ringed Plover** and a single **Grey Heron**. In the muddy inlet we identified **Lax-flowered Sea Lavender** and **Annual Seablite**.

Wednesday 28 May

Kilfenora, Doolin Bridge, The Aran Islands of Inismor(am) and then Inisheer (pm).

Weather: Perfect sunny weather, cloudless and warm with light breeze.

We encountered 2 **Juvenile Dippers** with 1 **adult** and several **Blackcap**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Garden Warbler**, 2 **Common swift** and numerous **Song Thrushes** on our local morning walk to Rathbaun.

What a perfect day for boating! After breakfast we took the Ferry, the 'Happy Hooker' from Doolin to Kilronan on Inish Mor, one of the Aran Islands. We birded from the deck throughout the pleasant crossing. Birds seen included 1 **Storm Petrel**, over 20 **Northern Gannet**, 3 **Razorbill**, numerous **Arctic** and **Common Tern**, **Common Gull**, **Kittiwake**, a couple of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**. A lot of **Common Guillemots**, **Black Guillemots** and **Great Black-backed Gulls** were also seen. Upon arrival we met our tour bus and driver near the quay and had a well guided whistle stop trip around part of the Island, enjoying the stunning scenery, many small dry stone wall bordered fields and old croft houses. Apparently there are 14,000 small fields on Inish Mor alone! We passed horse-drawn carts and quaint dwellings all with superb sea-views before we were dropped off near Dun Aonghasa. After looking in the Aran Knitwear and craft shops (where Lisa made a rather stunning purchase!), we had a local lunch of Tomato or Mushroom soup and more delicious Irish Soda bread.



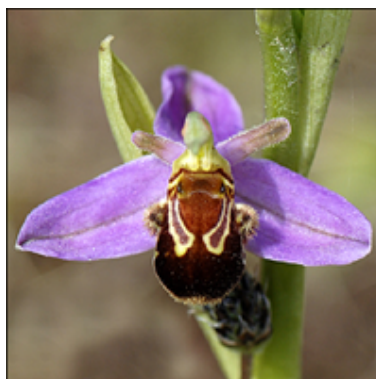
An Aran gift shop with Lisa's sweater pre-purchase!

To work off lunch, we climbed up a fairly steep, busy path to a dramatic ring fort called Dun Aonghasa, perched some 1,000 metres above the sea on a dramatic limestone cliff top setting. On the way up we encountered an abundance of butterflies! with the highlight being the stunning **Marsh Fritillary**, many of which were visible just off the path along with numerous **Dingy Skipper**, **Small Blue** and **Common Blue Butterflies**. We also found several metallic **Rose Chafer's** and a **Cockchafer**. Interesting plants included the large **Babbington's Leek** with its irregular flowers (bulbs not visible), **Spring Gentians** and **Bloody Cranesbill**.

What an incredible coastal view we had at the top, quite spectacular and refreshing! The odd **Cinnabar Moth** was also noted up near the top of the fort. After a rest we made our way back down and met up with our driver who took us back to the busy quay. Here we enjoyed a swift half a lager in the afternoon sun before heading back to the Pier for our Ferry to Inisheer. More comic Terns and many Gulls and Auks were noted between Islands on the Ferry crossing.

Some of the group walked from the Pier up to Brid Poil's house noting **Bee Orchids** on the way! Others took all the luggage and made their way up to the house via Taxi (an electric taxi which gets plugged in at night!). After a great day out we were soon enjoying a warm welcome from Brid and enjoying a hearty roast beef dinner with wine and an enormous dessert . . .

After supper and log a few of the group retired for the night whilst the rest of us took a relaxed evening stroll along the many ivy clad tracks and field margins in the west of this stunning Island landscape. Notable plants included **Maidenhair Fern** and more **Irish Saxifrage** and **Bee Orchids**. There was also a movement of **Sand Martins** and the usual good numbers of **Blackbird**, **Robin** and **Song Thrush** as well as the ever present **Hooded Crows** and **Rooks**!



The stunning Bee Orchid.

Thursday 29 May

Inisheer East Side, Loch Mor, Inisheer West.

Weather: Warm and sunny am, heavy rain bursts in afternoon, muggy and cloudy later.

After a superb breakfast, we walked around to explore the East side of Inisheer and enjoy the spectacular Island scenery. Cuckoo's were heard calling and several were noted as we identified more **Bee Orchids, Sea Beet, Sea Mayweed, Common Valerian** and **Tree Mallow**, to name but a few as well as more **Babbington's Leeks**. We also saw the interesting **Dog Lichen**. Soon we were at the impressive Church in the sand site which dates back to the 10th century! Liz freed a young **Blackbird** from a small low building housing a celtic carved stone slab. After a look around this intriguing site we continued our walk and came across Loch Mor. We stood overlooking the Lake and tried to keep a watchful eye on two very playful young ponies who were intent on biting binocular straps and searching bags for apples! **Ivy Broomrape** was noted along the Lake fringes and **Mute Swans** and **Mallard** were spotted out across the Lake. **Sand Martins** and **Barn Swallows** hunted over the mill pond waters. Next we headed for the coast where we viewed the wreck of the Plassy, a large vessel blown onto the rocks in a storm in the 1960's, thankfully without loss of life. The wreck dominates the skyline and was an impressive sight.

We returned to Brid's for a much needed lunch and in the afternoon some of the group went off to look for some glasses which had been lost in the morning, whilst others went on a very long walk to explore the western parts of the Island. Everyone ended up being caught out in a very heavy down pour in the afternoon but spirits were kept lifted by the glasses being found and the walkers on the west seeing more plant species and quite a different habitat on the more exposed western side. The rain soon gave way to sunshine, a very fresh smell in the air and a certain 'mugginess'. Dotted around the Island we noted the traditional boats built of wood and tarred canvas, the 'Currachs', which were pulled up beyond the tideline.

Another lovely meal awaited us back at Brid's B&B and we completed our log again in the front room after dinner. Liz, Ailsa and Rebecca later headed out for a dusk 'Otter' watch at Loch Mor, but unfortunately did not see an Otter there this time, there were however numerous midges and the odd tick (we found out about these later!).



The Plassy, Inisheer.

Friday 30 May

Signal Tower, Village of Inisheer, Cliffs of Moher, Lisdoonvarna.

Weather: Cloudy with outbreaks of rain am, Sunny spells pm. Humid throughout.

A pre-breakfast sortie near Brid's house saw us reach the Signal Tower where there was known to be a breeding pair of **Red-billed Chough** in previous years. Before long, those who had joined us for the walk were enjoying superb views of one close individual on the Tower ruins, looking down at us. A real pre-breakfast treat before returning for smoked Kippers, soda bread and coffee! Of course we had to return to the Tower after breakfast and packing, and after a long wait and doubt over whether a Chough would again be seen, we were all eventually enjoying superb views of a pair of **Red-billed Chough** at very close range a wonderful scarce bird and a great bird for the trip!

We walked further to another ruin, O'Brien's Tower and enjoyed views of **Linnet** along the road as it started to spit with rain. Another enjoyable stroll along the strandline, beachcombing ended with us arriving at a seafront pub where we ordered much needed coffee for all. I set up the scope whilst we awaited coffee and was delighted to find a summer plumaged **Great Northern Diver** out at sea, which everyone managed to get a look at as it headed further out along with a lot of **Common Guillemot** and a few **Black Guillemot**.

Later down at the pier we were met by Brid Poil and our luggage and said our farewells to Brid and Inisheer. The Ferry crossing back was not in the same conditions as going out, as it was still light drizzle to heavier rain outbreaks. However, birding was still productive with a **Manx Shearwater** being seen well as well as our first **Atlantic Puffins** of the trip. Another **Great Northern Diver**, **Kittiwakes**, **Northern Fulmar**, **Common** and **Arctic Tern** and **Common Gulls** were also noted along with **Common** and **Black Guillemots**.

We were met by our smiling driver 'Bill' on arrival at Doolin and were soon heading out to the Cliffs of Moher, stopping en route to have another Seafood Chowder at a very nice local cafe on the outskirts of Doolin. The Cliffs of Moher were a disappointment this year, after the site has been made a massive tourist trap with expensive car park, shops, centre and high stone walls ruining the views of the cliffs themselves and the hundreds of nesting seabirds which use them to breed at the time of year. We struggled to find a spot where we could get good scope views of the birds on the cliffs. However we were delighted by several passing and calling **Red-billed Chough** and brief views through the scope of **Puffins** on the cliffs grassy slopes and the ledges full of **Common Guillemots**. Higher up the cliff face **Razorbill**, **Fulmar** and **Kittiwake** were also viewed nesting. As we left the site, we enjoyed a large area of **Meadow Thistle** in a field near the car park.

Back in Lindoonvarna, we visited the 'Burren Smokehouse' before returning to Kincora House for our last night of the trip. We enjoyed another home-cooked meal and a Guinness or two before the last log and packing. Some of the group and later, the leaders, made it down to the local Tavern for a spot of local Irish music and Guinness before bed.

Saturday 31 May

Depart Kincora House, Walk near Craggaunowen, Craggaunowen, Airport..

Weather: Cloudy with sunny spells am. Sunny and hot pm.

We got up early to do our last packing before our final Irish Breakfast and farewells to Doreen and the Kincora House. Liz and Bill dropped Rebecca and the group off on the road near Craggaunowen before taking Lisa and Peter to the airport to catch their flight back to Chicago. Along the roadside and up into some stunning Fern rich woodland, we had a **Kestrel** and several singing **Blackcaps** as well as hearing **Treecreeper**. At 10 am we met inside the Craggaunowen site and started a very interesting guided walk with one of the staff there. Throughout the walk we spotted a new **Moorhens nest**, the **Robin nest** as well as seeing **Coal tit**, **Long-tailed Tits** and **Wrens**. Liz re-joined us during the walk and after our guided tour was over, we headed back to the coach and onwards to Shannon airport and the end of our fascinating Irish trip.

Liz Charter & Rebecca Nason, June 2008

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Aran Knitwear.

BIRD LIST:

Mute Swan: Seen on 4 days, highest count 4 adults and 7 cygnets on 28th.

Common Shelduck: Seen on 4 days, maximum of 20+ on the 27th at Fanore Sand Dunes.

Mallard: Seen on five days in small numbers..

Great Northern Diver: 1 adult winter bird on the 27th near Black Head, 1 summer adult on the 30th from Inisheer.

Northern Fulmar: A few noted along the coast on 4 days. A lot seen on the 30th between Inisheer and Doolin and again at the Cliffs of Moher.

Manx Shearwater: 1 seen from the ferry on the return crossing from Inisheer to Doolin on the 30th.

(European) Storm Petrel: 1 seen from the ferry between Doolin and Inish Mor on the 28th.

Great Crested Grebe: A pair noted at Loch Bunny on the 26th.

Little Grebe: 1 noted on the 28th.

Grey Heron: Individuals noted on 4 days.

Little Egret: 1 along the estuary from Shannon Lagoons on the 31st.

Northern Gannet: Good numbers seen along the coast on the 27th and again on the ferry crossings to and from the Aran Islands on the 28th and 30th.

Great Cormorant: A few seen on 4 days, highest count 6+ on 27th along coast near Black Head.

European Shag: Noted on 4 days, a lot were seen on the 30th from the ferry between Inisheer and Doolin.

Common Kestrel: 2 observed on the 26th and individuals at Eagle Rock on the 27th and on Inisheer on the 29th.

Peregrine Falcon: 1 distant bird on the 25th, 2 hunting over Eagle Rock on the 26th and 1 very good close view of an individual over our heads in the Caher Valley on the 27th + nest.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk: 1 seen on 26th.

Common Moorhen: 1 to 2 noted on the 28th.

Eurasian Oystercatcher: Individual on the coast on the 27th and 2 on the 28th at Doolin.

Northern Lapwing: 1+ seen briefly in flight display on outer Islands from ferry near Inish Mor on the 28th.

Black-tailed Godwit: 12 together at the Shannon Lagoons on the 24th.

Ringed Plover: 3 noted on the 27th, 2 at The Rine and one at the Sand dunes.

Common Sandpiper: 1 seen distantly through scope on Loch Bunny on 26th.

(Ruddy) Turnstone: 2 seen well through scope at Loch Bunny on 26th.

Dunlin: A flock of 70+ at Shannon Lagoons on the 24th.

Common Gull: Many noted throughout trip.

Herring Gull: Many noted throughout trip.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 2 noted on the 28th.

Great Black-backed Gull: Many noted daily throughout trip.

Black-headed Gull: Noted on 6 days, highest count was 30+ feeding around Loch Bunny on 26th.

Little Gull: 1 noted by leader from ferry from Doolin to Inish Mor on 28th.

(Black-legged) Kittiwake: Good numbers around coast on 27th and from ferry between Doolin and Inish Mor and Inisheer on 28th and on return journey on 30th.

Sandwich Tern: 20+ noted along the coast on the 27th and on Inisheer on the 28th and 29th. Highest count was 30+ on the 30th. Best views were through scope as many rested on the beach at the 'Plassy' wreck.

Common Tern: Both Common and Arctic seen in good numbers from ferry on 28th and 30th. There were more Common than Arctic (40+ on 28th noted).

Arctic Tern: Seen in small numbers from ferry on 28th and 30th, highest count 15+ on 28th.

Little Tern: 6 seen from ferry on the 28th.

Common Guillemot: 2 seen on the coast on the 27th, then a lot seen daily from 28th – 30th from Aran Islands ferry crossings. High numbers seen nesting colonially at the Cliffs of Moher on the 30th also.

Razorbill: Small numbers seen on 27th and 28th. A lot seen from ferry to Doolin on the 30th.

Black Guillemot: Good numbers along the coast on 27th (mainly in breeding pairs close to the cliff bases) and on the Islands and ferry crossing 28th – 30th.

Atlantic Puffin: First ones noted on our ferry crossing back to Doolin on 30th, then a lot noted at the Cliffs of Moher later the same day.

Woodpigeon: A few noted each day.

Dipper (Irish Race): Seen on early morning walks at Rathbaun Park on 4 days. Individual adults on 25th and 26th, then 1 adult and a Juv on 27th and 1 adult and 2 Juv's on the 28th.

Short-eared Owl: Noted by Lisa early morning of the 27th near Kincora House.

Eurasian Collared Dove: A few noted throughout trip.

Common (Eurasian) Cuckoo: Several seen and heard throughout trip, highest count was 5 on the 29th on Inisheer.

Common Swift: 2 flew over during our early morning walk at Rathbaun Park on the 28th.

Eurasian Jay (Irish Race): 1 seen by leader from coach briefly.

Eurasian (Common) Magpie: Seen in good numbers throughout.

Red-billed Chough: A pair seen at the Signal Tower, Inisheer on the 30th and 7+ noted from the Cliffs of Moher later the same day.

Eurasian (Western) Jackdaw: Seen in good numbers throughout.

Rook: Seen in good numbers throughout.

Hooded Crow: Good numbers noted each day.

Northern (Common) Raven: Only one bird seen on the 26th at Eagle Rock.

Great Tit: A few noted on the 25th and 26th at Rathbaun Park also a nest at Craggaunowen on 24th.

Blue Tit: A few noted on 5 days.

Coal Tit (Irish Race): 2 seen in conifers in Rathbaun Park on the 25th and another in same location on 28th.

Sand Martin: Observed on 4 days, highest count was 20+ moving over Inisheer on the 29th.

Barn Swallow: Good numbers seen daily.

House Martin: Ones and twos on the 25th and 27th, a few noted on Inisheer on 30th.

Long-tailed Tit: A family flock of 8 noted on 25th and small numbers seen together on 26th and 28th.

Skylark: Good numbers seen and heard daily.

Sedge Warbler: 3+ pairs seen well in the reedbeds of the Shannon Lagoons on the 24th and 31st.

Reed Warbler: 1+ pair at the Shannon Lagoons on the 24th.

Willow Warbler: Heard regularly throughout trip, only a few actually seen.

Chiffchaff: Individuals noted on the 26th at the Burren Perfumery and singing on Inisheer on the 30th.

Blackcap: Heard singing on two days and 2 males observed together on early morning walk at Rathbaun Park on 28th.

Garden Warbler: One seen at Rathbaun Park on 28th.

Common Whitethroat: Only a couple of individuals heard throughout trip!

Goldcrest: Singing at Rathbaun Park on the 26th and 27th and couple seen there on the 28th.

(Winter) Wren: Heard in good numbers daily, a lot noted on the Aran Islands every day.

Eurasian Treecreeper: Heard and seen briefly at Craggaunowen on 24th and 31st.

Common (European) Starling: Good numbers throughout.

Blackbird: Good numbers recorded throughout.

Song Thrush: Good numbers recorded throughout.

Mistle Thrush: 2 seen at the Fort on the 25th.

European Robin: Good numbers throughout.

Common Stonechat: Good numbers throughout, many with offspring, highest count was a family of 5+ on 27th.

Northern Wheatear: 1 noted on the 26th, 6+ on the 27th around Black Head and a few seen on 28th and 29th on Inisheer.

Spotted Flycatcher: One bird noted on four days at Rathbaun Park.

House Sparrow: Numerous throughout, recorded daily.

Dunnock (Hedge Accentor): Good numbers recorded throughout.

Grey Wagtail: 1 seen at the river at Rathbaun Park on the 26th and 27th. A pair seen well along the river in the Caher Valley also on the 27th.

Pied Wagtail: A few noted daily.

Meadow Pipit: Good numbers seen and heard daily.

Rock Pipit: Fairly good numbers along the coast up near Black Head and on Inisheer.

Common Chaffinch: Only a few observed on the 26th, 27th and 28th.

European Greenfinch: A couple of vocal birds observed in conifers behind Corcomroe Abbey ruin on 25th.

(Eurasian) Siskin: A pair heard and seen briefly in flight on the 28th.

European Goldfinch: 1 seen on Inisheer from Brid's on the 28th, 6+ observed whilst out walking on the 29th.

Common Linnet: A few pairs noted most days.

Eurasian Bullfinch: 1 heard on 25th and another on 27th. Individuals also seen by leaders from coach.

Yellowhammer: Individuals noted on 26th and 27th.

Reed Bunting: At least two pairs seen well at the Shannon Lagoons on the 31st.

MAMMALS:

Red Fox: 1 seen running through a field on way to Kincora House from airport on 24th.

Common (Harbour) Seal: 6+ noted on 26th from the Whitethorn Centre, and others noted on the 28th and 29th from Inisheer.

Irish (Mountain) Hare: 3 seen on the 26th after leaving the Perfumery. One seen very well by all at close range!

European Rabbit: Only a few noted on 3 days, individuals on 25th and 28th and 5 at Sand dunes on 26th.

Harbour Porpoise: A group of 5 and then a 3 were noted along the coast past Black Head on the 26th.

AMPHIBIANS:

Common Frog: A couple seen on the 26th.

REPTILES:

Common Lizard: 1 smart individual noted on the 29th during a walk on Inisheer.

BUTTERFLIES:

Small White: One on the 28th.

Green Veined White: A few seen on 4 days.

Orange Tip: 2 noted on the 28th at Dun Aonghasa.

Small Copper: One seen at Dun Aonghasa on 28th.

Small Blue: A lot noted at Dun Aonghasa on 28th.

Common Blue: One noted on the 26th, good numbers noted on the 28th and 29th on Inish Mor and Inisheer.

Red Admiral: One noted whilst out walking on Inisheer on the 29th.

Painted Lady: One observed on the 26th.

Small Tortoiseshell: One seen on the 25th.

Marsh Fritillary: Lots of these stunning butterflies enjoyed at Dun Aonghasa on the 28th.

Small Heath: One noted on the 28th.

Peacock: One seen on Inish Mor the 28th and another on Inisheer on the 30th.

Speckled Wood: One on a walk on Inisheer on 29th and another at Cliffs of Moher on 30th.

Wall Brown: 2 noted on the 29th on Inisheer.

Dingy Skipper: A couple noted on 26th at the Burren Perfumery and a lot seen at Dun Aonghasa on the 30th.

MOTHS:

The Lackey: Good numbers of caterpillars noted on 4 days.

The Drinker: One caterpillar noted on the 28th.

Common Heath: One observed on the 26th.

Cinnabar: A few noted on the Aran Islands, 28th 29th and 30th.

Burnet Companion: One seen well on the 25th.

Fox Moth: One found on the 26th.

Emperor Moth: A beautiful male found at the edge of Loch Bunny on the 26th.

Scarce Crimson and Gold: One noted on the 27th.

Pyraasta sp (micro): One noted on the 27th.

DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES:

Common Blue Damselfly: A few noted on the 26th on a roadside walk near Mullach Mor. On dead one noted on the 30th.

Large Red Damselfly: A few noted around the lake at Craggaunowen on the 24th.

Blue-tailed Damselfly: A few noted at Craggaunowen on the 24th · Mullach Mor on the 26th and Shannon Lagoons on the 31st.

Hairy Dragonfly: Several noted at the Shannon Lagoons on the 31st.

OTHER INSECTS:

Rubytail Wasp (chrysis ignite): 3 of these little gems seen at Dun Aonghasa on the 30th, another on the 29th on Inisheer.

Cockchafer: One seen on the 28th at Dun Aonghasa.

Rose Chafer: 2 noted on the 26th and a few on the 28th.

Cuckoo Bee sp: 2 observed on the 26th.

Click Beetle: 2 species seen on the 28th and 29th on Inisheer.

A Pond Snail, Lymnaeidae sp: A few seen on the 26th at Loch Bunny?

Heath Snail - Helicella itala: Seen daily, good numbers on the Aran Islands.

Small land Snail – Oxychilus sp (helveticus?): Noted throughout in small numbers.

The White-lipped Snail – Cepaea hortensis: Noted throughout in good numbers.

Brown Garden or Common Snail – Helix aspersa: Noted throughout in good numbers.

Round-mouthed Snail - Pomatias elegans: Noted at Loch Bunny on the 26th.

PLANTS

24 May

Shannon lagoon

Bird's Foot Trefoil	common
Bramble	common
Brookweed	common by bird hide
Bush Vetch	common
Common reed	dominant over wide areas
Common cottongrass	patches within the reeds
Creeping Cinquefoil	common
False fox sedge	occasional
Greater Pond Sedge	locally dominant
Lesser Trefoil	common on track
Ox-eye Daisy	common
Ragged robin	common
Red Clover	common
Sallow	bushes around margins of lagoon
Sea Club-rush	locally dominant around lagoon
Silverweed	common on wet ground

Spartina Grass patches on saltmarsh
Teasel patches

Cragaunowen

Bog bean
Water violet occasional near crannog
Yellow water lily
Ivy leaved duckweed
Common duckweed
Yellow flag iris

25 May

Cahermacnaughton

Irish saxifrage occasional plants on top of the ring fort
Rue leaved saxifrage occasional plants on top of the limestone walls
Bush vetch common on the fort
Rustyback fern common in the walls of the fort
Polypody one plant by road
Field forget me not common on the fort where soil disturbed
Garden knotweed –Polygonum sp widespread in disturbed ground

Corcomroe Abbey

Pellitory of the wall common on ruins
Long headed poppy group of diminutive plants on high ledge
Lady's smock in field near front of abbey
Quaking grass in field near front of abbey
Cotton grass clump in field near front of abbey with limestone flora
Brooklime small patch in wet field

Abbey Hill

Bird's Foot Trefoil common
Bloody Cranesbill colourful clumps on Abbey Hill
Burnet Rose common on Abbey Hill
Bush Vetch common
Carline thistle last years dead flowers + new shooting rosettes of leaves
Common milkwort common
Common Spotted Orchid frequent on Abbey Hill
Common Twayblade frequent on Abbey Hill
Cowslip in limestone grassland on Abbey Hill
Dense Flowered Orchid small number on path up between rocks
Early Purple Orchid many flowers in different shades of purple
Field madder locally common
Greater Knapweed near parking for Abbey Hill
Hart's Tongue Fern common in grykes
Hawthorn common in grassland on Abbey Hill
Hazel on limestone grassland at Abbey Hill
Herb Robert common on limestone
Honeysuckle frequent
Hop Trefoil locally common
Imperforate St Johns's wort one plant
Kidney Vetch occasional at Abbey hill
Knapweed common not flowering
Lady's Bedstraw occasional roadsides and Abbey Hill
Lesser Butterfly Orchid occasional and not quite fully open at Abbey Hill
Meadow thistle locally frequent
Maidenhair Spleenwort common on walls
Moonwort small plants seen among short grass.
Mouse-eared Hawkweed along roadside and on grassland Abbey Hill
Mountain everlasting abundant

Ox eye daisy	common
Pignut	common
Quaking Grass	common
Rustyback Fern	common on walls
Salad Burnet	frequent
Sesleria / Blue Grass	abundant on Abbey Hill
Shining Cranesbill	frequent by track at Abbey Hill
Spindle	occasional growing in grykes
Spring Gentian	locally abundant in full flower \on Abbey Hill
Thyme	on ant hills at Abbey Hill
Tormentil	at Abbey Hill
Wall Lettuce	common growing out of cracks in limestone at Abbey Hill
Wall Pennywort	common
Wall Rue	common on walls
Wild carrot	occasional
Wild marjoram	locally common by track
Wild strawberry	occasional
Wood Sage	occasional
Wood sorrel	occasional under bushes
Yarrow	common
Yellow Rattle	common on Abbey Hill
Yellow Wort	just coming out on Abbey Hill

26 May**Lisdoonvarna, Rathbaun Park**

Common Bugle	locally common
Heath Spotted Orchid	locally common
Western Marsh Orchid	occasional
Hybrid between Western Marsh and Heath Spotted Orchid	
Meadow Thistle	locally abundant
Star Sedge	locally common
Tawny Sedge	locally common
Carnation Sedge	locally common
Glaucous Sedge	locally dominant
Water Avens	a couple of plants by river

Poulnabrone Dolmen

Brittle Bladder Fern	locally common in grykes
Spring Sandwort	occasional
Marsh Arrowgrass	occasional in hollow
Square-stemmed St John's wort	common in hollow
Glaucous Lady's Mantle	common in hollow by pool
Water Mint	common in wet hollow
Burnet Rose	pink form locally common
Bluebell	rare
Ox eye Daisy	common
Bird's Foot Trefoil	common
Common Milkwort	common
Wild Thyme	on mounds of short turf
Devil's Bit Scabious	in hollow
Field Mouse-ear	in enclosure round dolmen
Floating Pondweed	abundant in pond
Stonewort sp	common in pond and in springs in marshy hollow

Burren Perfumery

Wood Sage	common
Mountain Avens	locally dominant
Common Cow Wheat	occasional under shrubs
Wood Sanicle	common under bushes

Keelhilla,

Bitter Vetch	abundant
Yew	rare
Common Butterwort	locally common
Mountain Everlasting	common
Common Cottongrass (<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>)	locally common
Broad-leaved Cottongrass (<i>E. latifolium</i>)	locally common - slightly later flowering and much more sedge-like leaves
Wall Lettuce	common
Mountain Avens	very common at Keelhilla Holly
Dropwort	frequent
Bog Pimpernel	locally common
Pyramidal Bugle	local at Keelhilla
Round-leaved Sundew	local at Keelhilla with butterwort
Yellow Sedge	locally common
Flea Sedge	locally common
Lousewort	in wet area at Keelhilla
Bog Myrtle	one large clump
Black Bog Rush	locally dominant at Keelhilla
Bloody Cranesbill	abundant at Keelhilla and wherever limestone grassland
Common Butterwort	locally common at Keelhilla with black bog rush
Dropwort	common at Keelhilla
Early Purple Orchid	common at Keelhilla
Grass of Parnassus (leaves)	among black bog rush at Keelhilla
Carlina Thistle	common but not flowering
Cats Paw / Mountain Everlasting	common
Heather	local and quite surprising on limestone, Keelhilla
Helleborine sp	rare on Keelhilla, leaves only
Juniper	prostrate form found at Keelhilla
Spring Gentian	widespread

Lough Bunny,

Buckthorn	common by Lough Bunny
Stone Bramble	in grykes at Lough Bunny
Northern bedstraw	common by loch edge limestone slabs
Saw Sedge	growing along edge of Lough Bunny
Lesser Butterfly Orchid	one not yet out
Juniper	prostrate form
Guelder Rose	one or two in flower
Squinancywort	locally common
Western Marsh Orchid	on large specimen with wide leaves

Mullach Mor

Adder's Tongue Fern	locally abundant under hawthorn hedge by turlough
Biting Stonecrop	common
Burnet Rose	common, sometimes with rose chafer beetles on flowers
Common Twayblade	common, especially roadside at Mullach Mor
Dense-flowered Orchid	a group on roadside
Dropwort	leaves and buds
Fairy Flax	locally frequent
Fen Violet	in seasonally flooded area round lough at Mullach Mor
Goldenrod	occasional
Guelder Rose	occasional at Mullach Mor with rose chafers on flowers
Hart's Tongue Fern	common in grykes
Hazel	thick scrub in places
Helleborine sp	small number of leaf rosettes
Herb Robert	common
Holly	occasional

Maidenhair Spleenwort	in walls at grykes
Milkwort	common
Lesser Water Plantain	in shallow lough at Mullach Mor
Ox-eye Daisy	locally common
Primrose -	occasionally still in flower
Rustyback Fern	on walls
Salad Burnet	frequent
Shrubby Cinquefoil	locally abundant and flowering well at Mullach Mor
Spring Gentian	frequent at Mullach Mor
Spring Sandwort	one clump by roadside at Mullach Mor
Stone Bramble	locally in grykes
Tormentil	common
Turlough Dandelion	in seasonally flooded area round lough at Mullach Mor
Tutsen	occasional
Wall Lettuce	in limestone cracks and grykes
Wall Rue	common on walls
Western Marsh Orchid	occasional
Whitebeam sp	low growing possibly special Burren species.
Yew	scattered on limestone at Mullach mor, some protected from grazing by mesh cages.
Yellow Rattle	common

27 May

Poll Sallach,

Buck's Horn Plantain	common all along the coast
Bloody Cranesbill	common on limestone everywhere
Burnet Rose	common
Cats Paw / Mountain Everlasting	seen at Poll Sallach
Bird's Foot Trefoil	common
Early Purple Orchid	at Poll Sallach
Golden Rod	common and in flower at Poll Sallach
Hart's Tongue Fern	common
Hemp Agrimony	common in grykes at Poll Sallach
Hoary Rockrose	locally abundant at Poll Sallach
Maidenhair Fern	one clump in a gryke
Eyebright	occasional at Poll Sallach
Kidney Vetch	occasional
Lousewort	local at Poll Sallach
Rock Samphire	common at Poll Sallach
Rock Sea Lavender	locally common in cliff top saltmarsh
Spring Gentian	common
Spring Sandwort	rare at Poll Sallach
Sea Campion	at Poll Sallach
Sea milkwort	locally common in cliff top saltmarsh
Pignut	locally common
Quaking Grass	common
Red Clover	common
Ribwort Plantain	common
Sea Plantain	common at Poll Sallach

Fanore,

Dodder	in short dune grassland at Fanore
Eyebright	occasional
Marram Grass	locally dominant at Fanore
Pyramidal Orchid	occasional in bud
Sand Sedge	abundant at Fanore
Sea Bindweed	locally common in dunes
Sea Spurge	occasional

Caher Valley,

Bush Vetch	common
Common Butterwort	common in wet flush by roadside in Caher valley
Large-flowered Butterwort	one plant in Caher valley
Hazel	common
Spring Gentian	common
Early Purple Orchid	common

Pinnacle well

Fairy Foxglove	still flowering in places at the Pinnacle Well
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The Rine.

Annual Seablite	locally frequent on the strandline
Common Scurvygrass	by sea at the Rine
Common Storksbill	in dune grassland at the Rine
Colubine	locally frequent
Field Mouse-ear	occasional along the turf edge
Maidenhair Spleenwort	common
Milkwort	common
Orache sp	on strandline at the Rine
Parsley Piert	common on anthills
Rustyback Fern	common by gate
Sea Arrowgrass	locally common at the Rine saltmarsh
Sea Campion	common at the Rine
Lax-flowered Sea Lavender	locally abundant at the Rine saltmarsh
Sea Sandwort	abundant on upper shore
Sea Milkwort	locally common at the Rine
Wood Sorrel	occasional
Common Twayblade	occasional

28 May

Inishmor,

Babbington's Leek	by track
Bloody Cranesbill	by path up D_n Aonghasa
Early Purple Orchid	frequent
Field Mouse-ear	local
Hart's Tongue Fern	common
Herb Robert	on limestone
Honeysuckle	by roadside
Irish Saxifrage	on path to D_n Aonghasa
Kidney Vetch	occasional
Maidenhair Spleenwort	on walls
Mountain Avens	occasional
Mountain Everlasting	locally common
Ox-eye Daisy	occasional
Primrose	by path to D_n Aonghasa
Sea Campion	local
Spring Gentian	locally common
Thrift	on cliff tops at D_n Aonghasa
Western Marsh Orchid	rare by D_n Aonghasa centre
Wood Sage	occasional
Wild Arum (lords and ladies)	occasional
Wild Carrot	occasional

29 May

Inisheer, Church in the Sand, eastern walk

Babbington's Leek	common at roadside
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Bee Orchid	several in cemetery near church in the sand and by roadside
Bloody Cranesbill	common in fields with pavement
Dogwood	in one scrubby field
Irish Saxifrage	locally abundant near wreck of the Plassy
Madder	by roadside
Tree Mallow	locally common
Sand Sedge	around cemetery
Marram Grass	common around cemetery
Hemp Agrimony	Occasional by roadside
Dove's Foot Cranesbill	occasional
Scarlet Pimpernel	locally common
Sea Couch Grass	local by Currachs
Sea Beet	locally common
Sea Mayweed	occasional
Common Valerian	locally common
Woody Nightshade	on upper shingle beach

Loch Mor,

Ivy Broomrape (<i>Orobanche hederæ</i>)	occasional beside loch
Crested Hairgrass	by Loch Mor
Fennel-leaved Pondweed	abundant in Loch Mor
Hoary Whitlow Grass	a few plants

Castle Village, shore line and western walk up to Enda's Well

Ivy-leaved Toadflax	locally abundant
Alexanders	on roadside
Babbington's Leek	common at roadside
Bird's Foot Trefoil	common
Common Broomrape (<i>Orobanche minor</i>)	common in garden in village
Brookweed	locally common
Burnet Rose	common
Bush Vetch	common
Common Storksbill	in sandy grassland
Common Scurvygrass	road by the sea
Fern Grass	by roadside
Field Mouse-ear	local in sandy grassland
Hart's Tongue Fern	common
Honeysuckle	common
Kidney Vetch	locally common
Lady's Bedstraw	common
Long Headed Poppy	on disturbed ground
Maidenhair Fern	one plant in gryke by western shore
Maidenhair Spleenwort	common
Ox-eye Daisy	occasional
Parsley-piert	by path
Pignut	common
Polypody Fern	common
Pyramidal Orchid	common in grassland on sand, just opening
Ramping Fumitory	rare on disturbed ground
Rue-leaved Saxifrage	common on rock
Sea Campion	locally common
Sea Plantain	common
Shining Cranesbill	locally common
Stag's Horn Plantain	common
Squinancywort	by cemetery and church in the sand
Thrift	by shore
Thyme	common
Tree Mallow	near Castle Village

Wall Rue common
Western Marsh Orchid occasional

30 May

Inisheer, O'Briens Tower, Castle Village,

Alexanders roadside
Babbington's Leek roadside
Broomrape (*Orobanche minor*) in village
Spindle in field on Inisheer
Sea Spurge on shore
Sea Holly in dunes above beach

Cliffs of Moher

Meadow Thistle abundant in field by car park at Cliffs of Moher

31 May

Craggaunowen,

Broad Buckler Fern common
Male Fern common
Scaly Male Fern common in woodland
Soft Shield Fern common in woodland
Wood Sedge by woodland path
Yellow Water Lily common in lough
Yellow Flag in lough

May 2008

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