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## A Review of Trips in 2006

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> January:** The first trip of 2006 was a short afternoon trip to do some birdwatching at Rahasan Turlough, then on the way back to Galway we stopped at Oranmore Castle in Galway Bay to see the spectacle of thousands of wading birds coming in to roost at dusk. A very cold day but a beautiful sunset. Led by Pádraig Keirns.



**Monk's Fishing House**

and folklore, and strewn with remnants of human settlement over thousands of years. We looked at antiquities such as Roserrily Abbey (12<sup>th</sup> Century), Cong Abbey and the monks' fishing house (12<sup>th</sup> Century), Glebe Stone Circle (prehistoric), the Dry Canal (19<sup>th</sup> Century), the Neale Ziggurat (1700s) and Eochy's Cairn (prehistoric).

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March:** Trip to Omev Island in West Connemara. Accessible by car or on foot at low tide, the small island of Omev boasts sand-dunes and machair habitats, an abundance of rabbits and several remains of earlier human settlement, including shell middens and an Early Christian church. Very lucky with the weather on this trip; well worth getting out of town after St Patrick's Day. We also found a number of pellets, indicating that Greater Black-Backed Gulls are preying on Manx Shearwaters from nearby High Island with its seabird colonies.



**Sunset on Galway Bay**

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February:** Archaeological trip on a fine early spring day, led by the illustrious Will Anderson. The area around the Galway-Mayo border is rich in history



**High Island seen from Omev Island**

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> April:** "Mystical orbs and more in the granites of South Connemara", a geology walk with Martin Feely of NUI, Galway, looking at the history & mineralogy of the famous pink Galway granite in the Carna area of south Connemara, Co. Galway.

**Saturday 22-Sunday 23 April:** Trip to Boora Bog, Co. Offaly, to have a look at the Grey Partridge Project, where NPWS are trying to preserve Ireland's last grey partridge population on cutover bog. Took a lift on the back of a tractor, and were rewarded with the sight of two pairs of partridge in the fields, as well as a Hen Harrier being mobbed by Lapwings. On Sunday, walked through the bluebell woods of Abbeyleix, where we saw one of Ireland's oldest oak trees, as well as the oldest bridge, on the Nore.



Scanning for partridge on Boora Bog.

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup>- Monday 5<sup>th</sup> June:** Trip to the Sunny South East, visiting the Saltee Islands off Kilmore Quay in Wexford on Saturday. Massive colony of gannets on the cliffs at the southwest end, as well as shags, guillemots, and razorbills, puffins, and a pair of peregrines at the other end of the island. We were also mobbed by greater black-backed gulls while walking through bluebells, nettles,



A well earned break on the Great Saltee!



The Great Saltee Gannet Colony

scarlet pimpernel and sea campion. A well-earned barbecue that night was followed by a walk up Mount Leinster on the Wexford/Carlow border on Sunday, with its views over all of south-eastern Ireland. The perfect weather held up for the whole weekend!

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> July:** Dawn Bat Swarm at Aughnanure Castle near Oughterard. Only the brave ventured out for this early morning start, and unfortunately the weather wasn't on our side. A small number of bats were seen but not as many as had been hoped for.

**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August:** National Whale Watch Day. Trip to Black Head, near Ballyvaughan Co. Clare, looking for cetaceans with the help of Joanne O'Brien from GMIT. With its oceanic position and abundant headlands, Ireland is one of the best countries in Europe from which to watch whales.

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> October:** Fungal Foraging in Moycullen Woods. Luck was on our side for this trip as the showers stayed away and we had a crisp autumnal day to search for mushrooms of all shapes and sizes.



Just two of the many fungi seen on the fungal foray!

## 2007 Outings:

The first outing proposed for 2007 is a January weekend trip to visit the Wexford Slobbs and surrounding areas such as the Raven and Curraclloe Bay. The slobbs are internationally famous for wild geese as currently about 10,000 Greenland White-fronted Geese, one-third of the world population, spend the winter on the Slobbs. More details will follow.

Other possible outings for 2007 include:

- A wild food trip/cook-up
- Trip to Inishmurray
- Archaeology
- Bee / ant outing
- Moth trapping
- Lichen identification
- Geology trip.
- Weekend trip to Tory Island.

As ever the outings are decided by the interests of members, so if you have an idea for a trip, we would be delighted to hear about it!