

Blundering Round the Burren

Botany and Bits in Ireland
20 - 26th May 2017



Introduction

I sailed out from Pembroke to Rosslare and back from Dublin to Holyhead both journeys overnight with Irish Ferries.

Temperatures were quite pleasant high teens to mid 20's with occasional rain and a couple of misty mornings.

The photos are hyperlinked to larger versions.

Many thanks to both Gary from Somerset who I bumped into a few times, he was most helpful, and to John and his friends whom I spent an enjoyable day with looking for butterflies.

Everyone I met was very helpful but information was quite hard to come by both before and during the trip.

Targets were very mixed some plants and insects endemic to Ireland and the Burren in particular.

Diary

20th May 2017

Arriving just after dawn in Rosslare I headed to a woodland site not too far from Waterford. Here I was after **Irish Whitebeam** I had grid reference so it was easy to locate. A couple of tourist stops before I found myself on Ross Island here I was after another whitebeam, this one much rarer but once again a grid reference aided me locating **Scannell's Whitebeam** as did an enclosure presumably to stop deer eating the saplings. The weather changed for the worse and a few heavy rain showers had me moving on to the spectacular Dingle peninsular.



Large Flowered Butterwort

21st May 2017

I had a leisurely morning photographing **gulls** and wandering round Dingle until the boat trip at 11am. We headed out into the harbour which was very calm – thankfully. We passed plunge diving **gannets** and feeding **black guillemots** to where 'fungi' the famous **bottle nosed dolphin** was. He showed quite well a few times allowing for photographs and was too close for my camera for quite a bit of the trip. He has been in the harbour for over 30 years and tours run daily. Safely back on dry land it was time for lunch and I had some chips before heading north making a few tourist stops on the way. Late afternoon I headed to Loop head and the Bridges of Ross both for the spectacular scenery but also for the nesting **guillemots, razorbills** and **kittiwakes**. A nice family of **stonechats** and a few **meadow pipits** were battling with the strong wind. There were carpets of **wildflowers** on the headland including super displays of both **early and western marsh orchids**. I headed for the Burren where I was staying for the next few days.



Scannell's Whitebeam



Cliffs of Moher



Fungie the Bottlenosed Dolphin

22nd Day 2017

I spent the first part of the day looking for orchids in the Gortlecka area of the Burren a **dense flowered orchid** was located but had gone over and indeed it looked that the season was further advanced than usual, **flecked marsh orchids** were nearer the shore of Loch Gealain. Here I met Gary from Somerset and we had a nice chat about the Burren's plants, he had visited before. The sun disappeared and rain arrived so I headed off to the Cliffs of Moher along with thousands of other tourists. The rain moved off and I took a look at the seabird colony, the tourist only interested in the **puffins**, but I was really after **choughs** but only got a couple of flybys, they were a little elusive. I had enough of the crowds so I headed off up the coast and explored Poll Salach, a large area of limestone pavement which had a few **Irish hares** and a nice selection of plants including thousands of **heath spotted orchids** and in a few spots **early and western marsh orchids**. Last stop was Fanore where I searched the dunes for dense flowered orchids without luck, but plenty of **rabbits** were digging the place up. I tried a nearby limestone pavement where a local botany group were searching, but they had not seen dense flowered orchid either but recommended Blackhead as a reliable area, I would try in the morning. I headed for some food and called it a day.



Western Marsh Orchid



Bloody Cranesbill



Fulmar

23rd Day 2017

The weather was very poor with drizzle and thick mist so I did a few touristy things until late morning. The weather did improve so I visited a few spots on the coast ending up at Blackhead, I spent a few hours searching for orchids but could only find a few **dense flowered** that had gone over apart from a couple not yet out right near the top, but I never got round to revisiting to see if they were out later in the week. I explored a couple of other sites but did not really see much else apart from **Moorhen** and a **Holly blue**. I ended up at Gortlecka for a wander round where I bumped into a local knowledgeable couple and we chatted for a while about local wildlife, before I headed into Gort for some food.



Flecked Marsh Orchid

24th May 2017

I fruitlessly searched Fanore once more I only found **small argent and sable moths, rabbits** and **common and sandwich terns** on the beach. I moved on and headed to some random areas of pavement near Keelheela I searched for quite a while again without success. But here I bumped into Gary once more and he had seen some better condition **dense flowered orchids** and kindly shared the location, but first I visited Keelheela itself where Gary had seen plenty of **fly orchids** and they were out in force along with several gone over **dense flowered orchids**. **Wall brown** butterflies were out and about and two **cuckoo's** were battling it out, trying too out sing each other. I headed to the **dense flowered orchid** site where two white and two of the purple form, were still in reasonable condition. Gary turned up and searching the site further came up with both **fly orchid** and an **O'Kelly's orchid**. I headed to Poll Salach for another wander locating a pair of ringed plovers and a nice selection of plants in what was glorious weather and a few **speckled yellow moths**. I headed into Lisdoonvarna for some food and a visit to the Brew Pub for a nice pint to finish off the day



Dense Flowered Orchid

(purple form)

25th May 2017

After breakfast I headed to woods for a wander for butterflies, there was a nice selection some fresh **brimstones**, a tatty **peacock** and wood and green veined whites. Next I headed to Gortlecka, for a walk down the green road for butterflies, the conditions were very good and I parked behind another car, three people from Wexford were on a similar mission to me and we wandered the Green road together looking for butterflies, **wall browns** were very common but got the first **small heaths** of the trip and several **pearl bordered fritillaries**, but they were very active and I could not get a photo. It was a pleasant walk ending back at the car for lunch and then we took another wander round the nature trails where we saw **peregrine** and **buzzard** and a selection of butterflies. My fellow butterfly enthusiasts recommended a place for Marsh Fritillaries, I found it despite the rather scant directions but the site had been dug for peat and the only butterflies I saw were **orange tips**, so I had some food and called it a day.



Fly Orchid



Feral Goat



Ringed Plover



Marsh Fritillary

26th May 2017

I was at the rather small Lullybeg nature reserve near Allenwood just after 9am, the sun was up and it was warm. **Cryptic wood whites** were everywhere, and a **red admiral** flitted back and forth along the track. The target was **Marsh Fritillary**, and they were already flying and several showed well. I spent some time photographing them and took a wander round the environs of the reserve where I encountered several **azure damselflies**, but not much else. I headed off for an early lunch and a bit of shopping. Next stop was at Dublin airport to look for **Irish hares**. They were a bit elusive but I eventually found a large group although a distance away. There was the odd individual closer here and there, and they regularly crossed taxiways between aircraft and vehicles. Eventually one **hare** was spotted close to the fence and allowed a few reasonable photos, but none at point blank range. After having my fill of **hares** I headed into the centre of Dublin for walk round. I visited several of the major sights and wandered by the river in the pleasant sunshine before a bag of chips, bird wise there was a few **gulls** by the harbour but little else and I took the ferry to Holyhead after a good trip.



Cryptic Wood White



Stonechat



Rock Pipit

Checklists

Birds - 67

Moorhen	Coot	Woodpigeon
Rook	Hooded Crow	Magpie
Jackdaw	Mallard	Mute Swan
Pied Wagtail	Grey Wagtail	Blackbird
Chaffinch	Goldfinch	Robin
Wren	Dunnock	Great Tit
Blue Tit	Wheatear	Meadow Pipit
Song Thrush	Mistle thrush	Blackcap
Willow Warbler	Chiff Chaff	Raven
Cormorant	Shang	Fulmar
Starling	Swallow	Grey Heron
House Sparrow	Yellowhammer	Herring Gull
Lesser Black Backed Gull	Greater Black Backed Gull	Lapwing
Oystercather	Gannet	Linnet
Long Tailed Tit	Swift	Black Guillemot
Guilemot	Razorbill	Stonechat
Skylark	House Martin	Rock Pipit
Shelduck	Fulmar	Kittiwake
Bullfinch	Ringed Plover	Little Egret
Puffin	Chough	Common Sandpiper
Cuckoo	Peregrine	Buzzard
Common tern	Sandwich tern	Whitethroat
Collared Dove		



Black Guillemot

Selected Plants



Spring Gentian

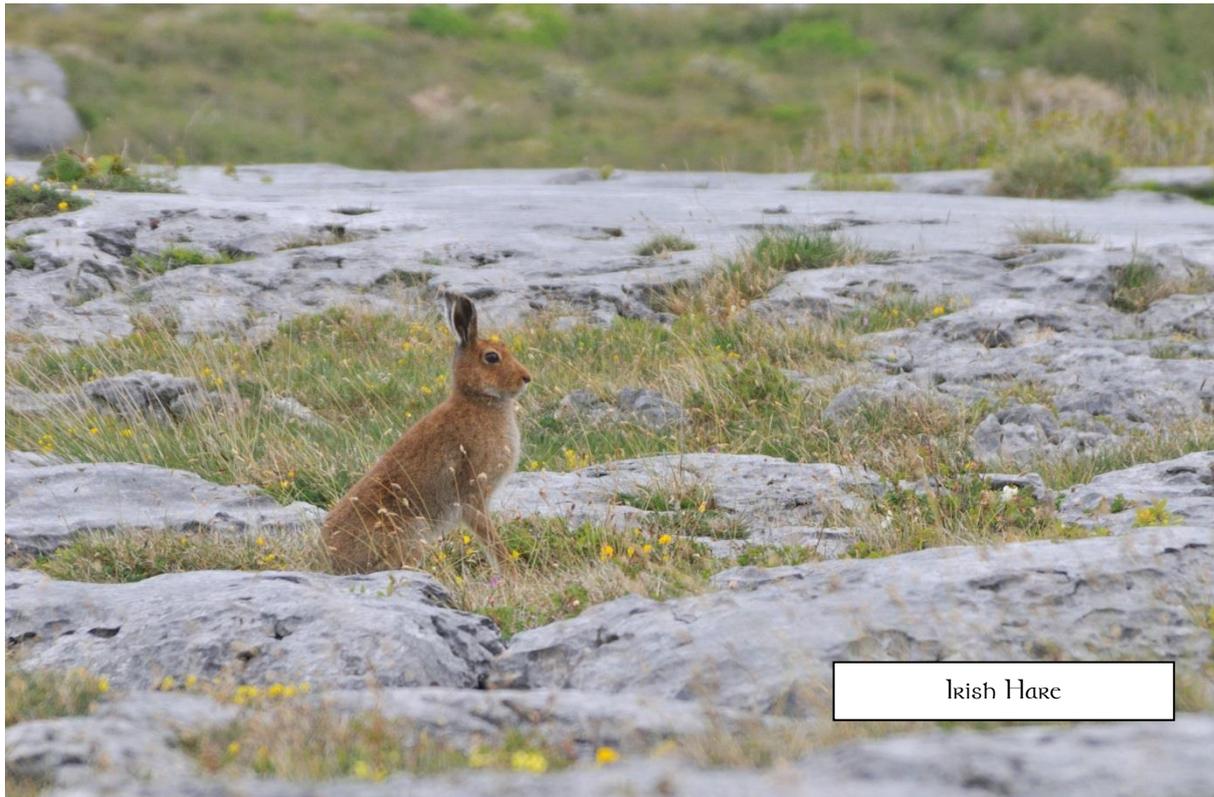
Dense Flowered Orchid	Western Marsh Orchid	Early Marsh Orchid
Flecked Marsh Orchid	O'Kelly's orchid	Fly Orchid
Early Purple orchid	Common Twayblade	Heath Spotted Orchid
Spring Gentian	Irish Whitebeam	Scannell's Whitebeam
Mountain Avens	Mountain Everlasting	Rock Samphire
Bloody Crane's-bill	Large flowered Butterwort	Thrift
Yellow Pimpernel	Shrubby Cinquefoil	Burnet Rose
Stone Bramble	Fen Violet	Buck's Horn Plantain
Dogswood	Hoary Rockrose	Sea Arrowgrass
Common Whitebeam	Maidenhair Fern	Sea Spleenwort
Wall Rue	Maidenhair Spleenwort	Rusty Back Fern
Germander Speedwell	Thyme Leaved Speedwell	Heath Dog Violet
Spotted Hawkweed	Irish Eyebright	Sheep's Bit



Mountain Avens

Dense Flowered Orchid

Hoary Rock Rose



Irish Hare

Irish Hare	Rabbit	Bottle Nosed Dolphin
Grey Seal	Pipistrelle sp	Common Frog
Red tailed Bumblebee	Common Carder Bee	Red Admiral
Speckled Wood	Peacock	Orange tip ssp hibernica
Wood White	Cryptic Wood White	Green veined White ssp britannica
Brimstone ssp gravesi	Large White	Small Heath
Marsh Fritillary	Pearl Bordered Fritillary	Dingy Skipper ssp baynesi
Small Blue	Common Blue ssp mariscolore	Wall
Small Heath	Speckled Yellow	Mother Shipton Moth
Burnet Companion Moth	Rose Chafer	Azure Damselfly
Hairy Dragonfly	6 Spot Burnet Moth	Four Spot Chaser
Holly Blue	Mint Moth	Pyrausta Sanguinalis
Small Argent and Sable	Brown Silver Line	Brown Trout
Feral Goat		

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