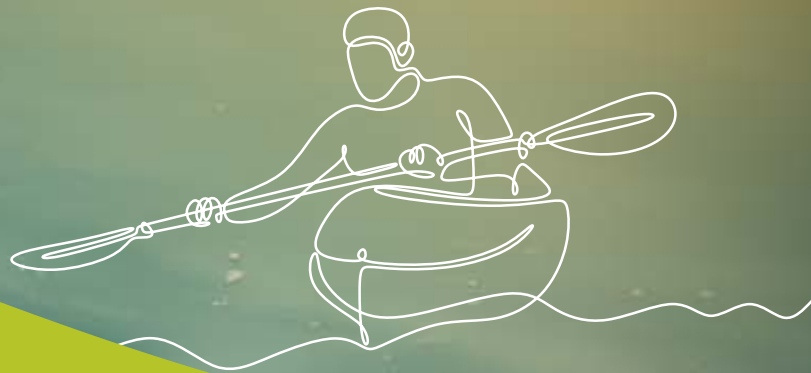


GOOD PRACTICE BEHAVIOURS FOR
Water-based
Recreation Users
RELATING TO
Water Birds



Fáilte
Ireland

The wetlands and coastal areas of Ireland attract a wide variety of waterbirds each year. These are important sites for resident and migratory species which use these areas for nesting, roosting and feeding. Birds are vulnerable to disturbance throughout the year. In the spring and summertime, birds are nesting and rearing chicks.

In the Autumn, Winter and Spring, many migrant species are feeding before beginning their journey to the far north to breed.



INTRODUCTION

The wetlands and coastal areas of Ireland provide an important function for tourism and recreation which support rural economies and local jobs. It is important to strike a balance between allowing people to enjoy water-based activities while avoiding impacts on waterbirds. Providers of water-based activities, and those engaging in it have an important role to play in ensuring that the development of water-based recreation in Ireland is sustainable.

The term 'wetland' covers a range of habitats including "areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres" (RAMSAR Convention, 2010).

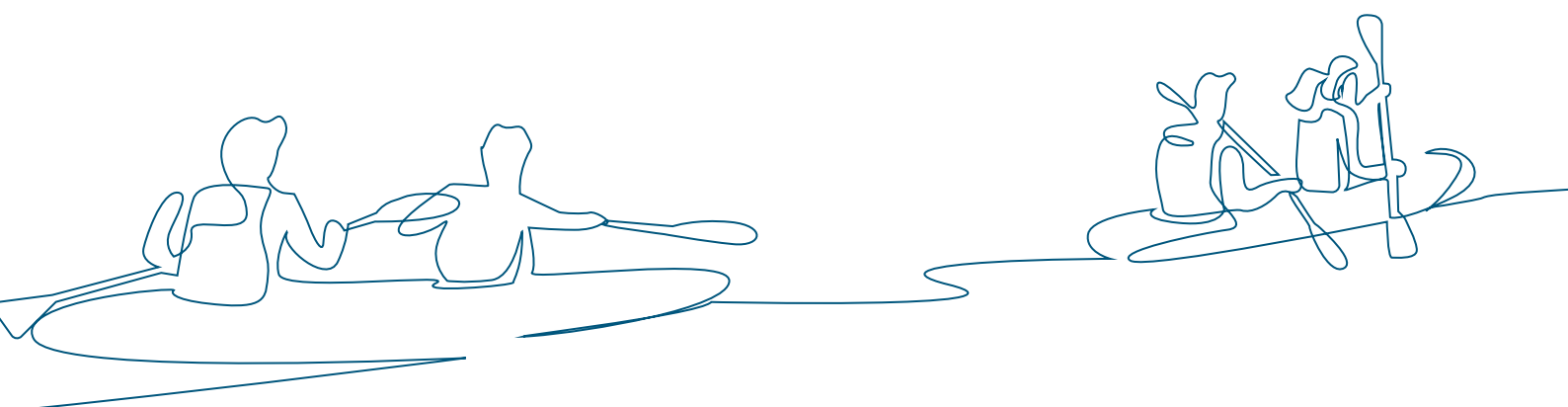


WATER-BASED RECREATION

Ireland's wetlands and coastal areas provide an important amenity area for locals domestic and international tourists. Water-based recreation including swimming, kayaking, rowing, surfing, kitesurfing, windsurfing, sailing, paddleboarding and boating are all key parts of the tourist offering in Ireland. As infrastructure is developed to cater for the existing and increasing demand for facilities to cater for water-sports enthusiasts, consideration must be given to the potential effects of increased footfall on wildlife and waterbirds in particular.

Inland lakes such as Lough Derg are home to numerous species of waterbirds that breed on the shores and islands. Access to the lake is provided from a number of points including Portumna, Dromineer and Mountshannon.

It is vital that people involved in water-based activities are aware of how to behave on the water, in particular, that small islands, rocks and reed beds should be avoided. These areas are likely to contain breeding birds in spring and summer that are sensitive to human disturbance.



WATERBIRDS

Ireland's abundance of waterways and coastlines are home to hundreds of thousands of waterbirds that make use of Irish wetlands throughout the year. Further details regarding Ireland's bird species are detailed on the BirdWatch Ireland [**website**](https://www.birdwatchireland.ie/).

Often, these areas are hot spots for recreational activity during the summer months, when the weather is warmer, and people spend more time outdoors engaging in water-based activities. To a lesser extent, waterways and coastal areas are used during the winter months for water-based activities and have the potential to impact wintering birds.

From spring to autumn, waterbirds nest on inland waterways and coastal areas. Depending on the location of the nests, some are more susceptible to disturbance than others. In general, bird nests are concealed in dense vegetation making it unlikely that a person would spot a nest by chance.

“ Unfortunately, though, by looking into that nest, or trying to get some photos to share with family, friends and social media, you could be putting the nesting attempt at risk of failure ”

[birdwatchireland.ie/
too-close-for-comfort-
bird-nests/](https://birdwatchireland.ie/too-close-for-comfort-bird-nests/)



**For this reason, it is important that people stay away from nesting habitats.
Some examples of nesting habitats are presented below:**



SANDY BEACHES
e.g. Little Tern, Ringed Plover



RIVERBANKS/LAKE SHORE/REEDBED
e.g. Mute Swan, Ducks, Divers, Grebes



VERTICAL BANKS
e.g. Kingfisher, Sand Martin



FRESHWATER PLAINS, DAMP GRASSLAND
e.g. Lapwing



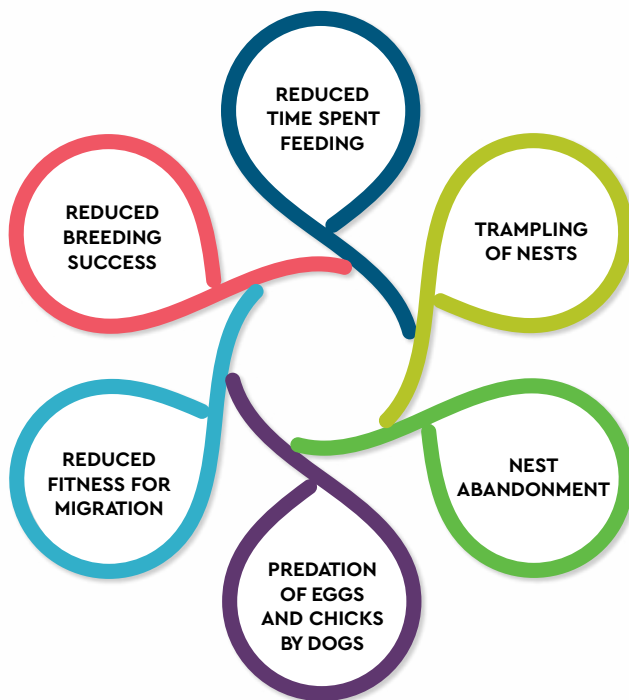
ROCKY CLIFFS/ ISLANDS
e.g. Terns, Gulls, Gannets, Puffins

MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS

In the autumn, Ireland receives an influx of migratory waterbirds from the far north. These include species of geese, ducks and waders. Overwintering species are typically found in coastal areas, particularly areas with vast intertidal areas, but also inland where they feed in fields, bogs and amenity grassland areas such as sports pitches.



EFFECTS OF DISTURBANCE DUE TO WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES ON BIRDS



SIGNS OF DISTURBANCE

- Head-bobbing, wing flapping and increased calling.
- Flushing or flying away.

If you notice these signs, you are too close and should move away. Some birds will stay on nests when approached by people. This does not mean that the bird is tolerant or not bothered by the presence of people.



Appendix A

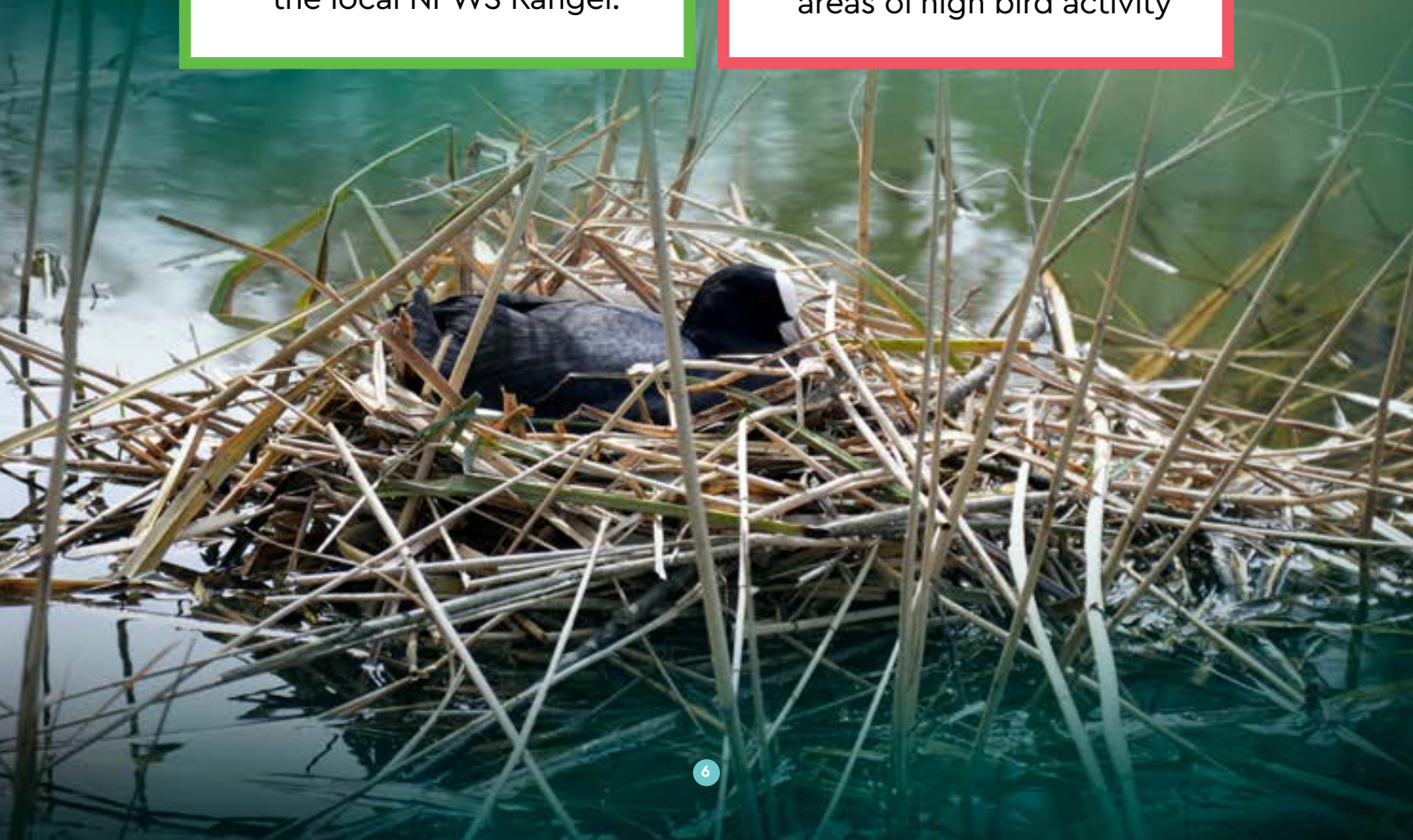
WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES – DO'S AND DON'TS RELATING TO WATER BIRDS

DO

- ✓ Stay away from sensitive areas (nesting, feeding, roosting habitat)
- ✓ Observe birds from a distance – 50m or more
- ✓ Use binoculars or a scope to view birds up-close
- ✓ Move away quietly if you accidentally encounter a birds nest
- ✓ Report any incidents to the local NPWS Ranger.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't approach reed beds, small islands or cliff nesting sites during spring and summer
- ✗ Don't approach birds, particularly birds on nests
- ✗ Don't make excessive noise in or near nests, roosts or feeding areas
- ✗ Don't make sudden movements or travel at excessive speeds near areas of high bird activity



www.failteireland.ie



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