

# Birds of Killala Bay

Killala Bay is both a Special Protected Area and Special Area of Conservation. A large number of birds of various species use this site throughout the year, making it an important area for wild birds.

Autumn and winter is an excellent time to see birds that feed in the bay as the site is used by a large number species of special interests due to their status as either Red or Amber listed Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland.

Around the harbour area, good numbers of waders, geese, ducks and other birds can be found. The car park opposite The Old Deanery Cottages is an excellent vantage point when the tide is low for **Ringed Plover**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Dunlin**, **Redshank**, **Curlew**, **Knot** and **Oystercatcher**. **Brent Geese** spend the winter in the area. As the tide rises and birds move closer, check for **Greenshank** and **Spotted Redshank**, which are often seen in the harbour area. **Heron** and **Little Egret** are regularly seen.



Brent Geese (Clive Timmons)



Walking along the front of the harbour towards the pier, check the channels for **Wigeon**, **Teal**, **Shelduck** and other ducks. Also looking across to the small island where **Turnstone** search for food.

Teal (BirdWatch Ireland)

Moving to the end of the pier gives good views of the sand banks where **Cormorants**, **Grey & Golden Plover** roost. At high tide, the deeper waters around the pier allow **Black Guillemot**, **Great-northern Diver** and **Red-breasted Merganser** to feed. Keep a sharp eye out for **Kingfisher**, which is often seen perching on the ropes and boats of the area.

A variety of **Gulls** can be seen across the harbour. Check for white winged gulls, which are occasional visitors during autumn, winter and early spring.



Black Headed Gull (Jon Freestone)

Also look out for migrating birds that maybe blown off course and take refuge in the bay. **Light-bellied & Pink-footed Geese** along with **Whooper Swan** have been seen during the autumn and winter. Other rarities reported include **Little Stint** (autumn 2007 & 2008), **American Golden Plover** (Oct 2008), **Curlew Sandpiper** (Oct 2008), **Ruff** (Nov 2007) and **Spoonbill** (Oct 2007). **Whimbrels** are regular visitors in May of each year. Also check the skies for **Peregrine**, **Buzzard** and **Golden Eagle**.

Good views of the estuary can be seen from Ross Strand, accessible from the Ballycastle road, turning right approximately 1/2km west of Killala.

Follow the road for about 1.5km, stopping where the road meets the estuary to check for **Little Egrets**, **Lapwing**, **Snipe**, **Shelduck** and **Bar-tailed Godwit**.



**Little Egret** (Micheal Casey)

At Ross Strand look out to sea for the chance of seeing **Red-throated** and **Great Northern Divers**, **Long-tailed Duck** and **Common Scoter**. If the tide is out then check the rocks on the beach for **Turnstone**, **Oystercatchers**, **Dunlin**, **Knot** and **Sanderling**.

During the summer good views of **Arctic**, **Common and Sandwich Terns** & **Gannet** fishing can be seen in the bay, whilst **Sand Martins** nest adjacent to the beach.

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### **Compiled by the Mayo Branch of BirdWatch Ireland**

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Website: [www.BirdWatchMayo.org](http://www.BirdWatchMayo.org)

Email: [birdwatchmayo@yahoo.com](mailto:birdwatchmayo@yahoo.com)

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### **BirdWatch Mayo is the local branch of BirdWatch Ireland**

#### **BirdWatch Ireland**

Unit 20, Block D,  
Bullford Business Campus,  
Kilcoole,  
Co. Wicklow, Ireland  
Tel: 353 (0)1 2819878 353 (0)1 2819878  
Fax: 353 (0)1 2810997

Website: [www.BirdWatchIreland.ie](http://www.BirdWatchIreland.ie)

Email: [info@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:info@birdwatchireland.ie)

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