

# Birds and Cut-away bogs

## progress, priorities and action plans for birds

Alan Lauder



# Introduction

- Established in 1968
- Largest conservation NGO in Ireland
- 15,000 members
- 30 local Branches for members
- 4 regional offices
- 17 nature reserves
- BirdLife International partner for the Republic of Ireland
- Primary objective: conservation of birds & biodiversity in Ireland

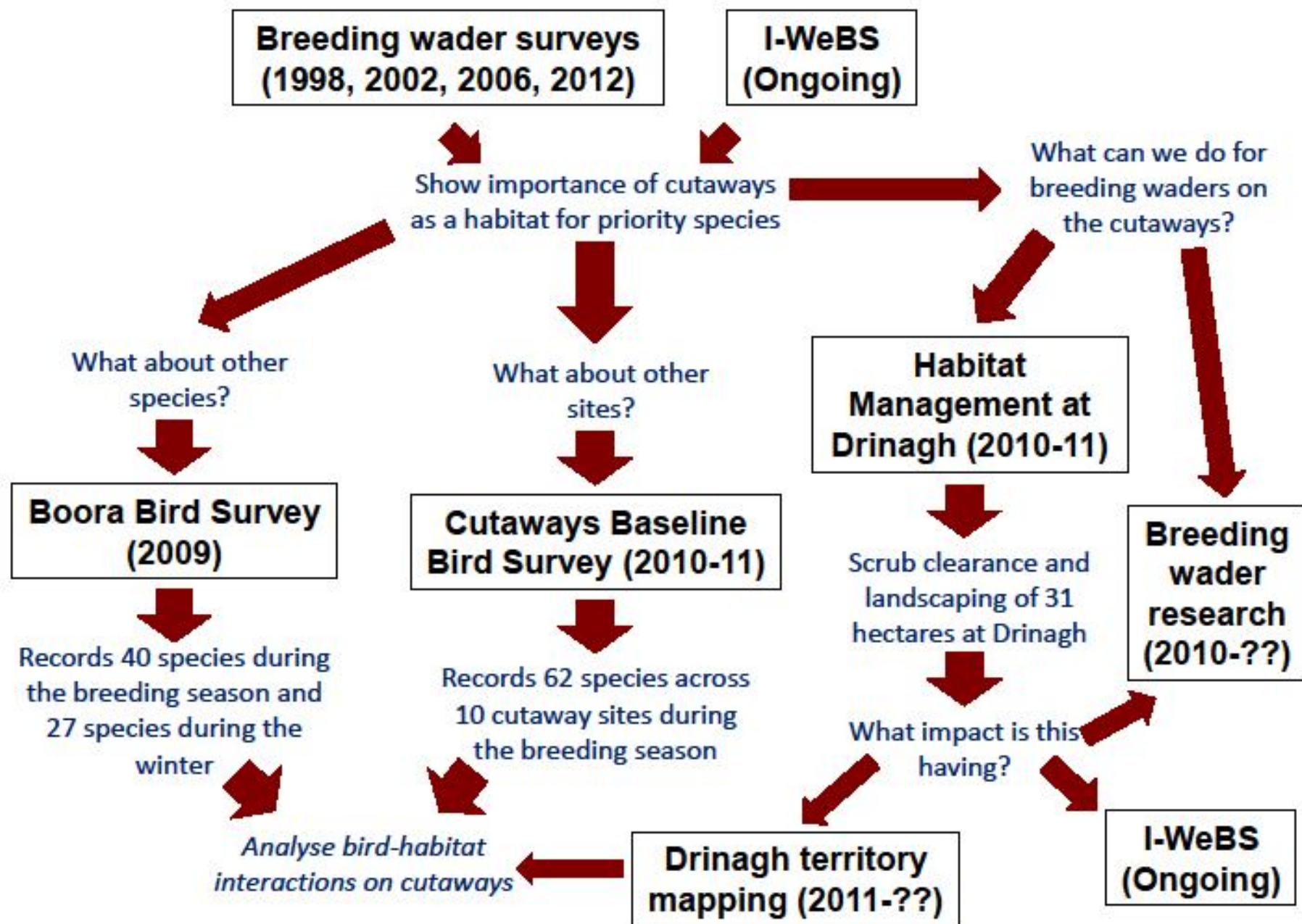


# Talk outline

- Birds of cutaways
- Action planning for birds
- How BnM & other work on cutaways contributes
- Opportunities for bird conservation on cutaway bogs

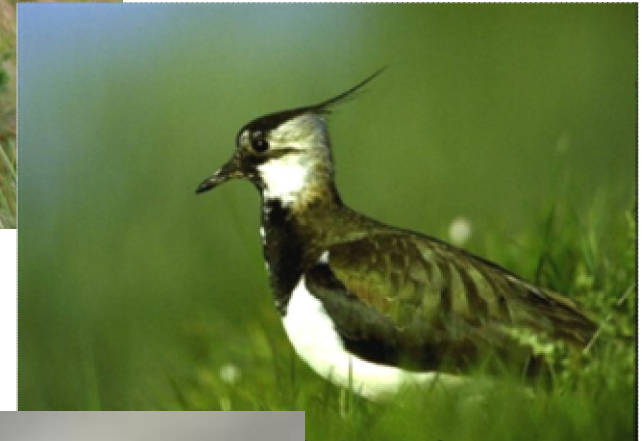
# BirdWatch Ireland & Bord na Móna working together

- Wintering bird surveys
- Breeding bird surveys
- Breeding wader research
- Trial habitat restoration/rehabilitation
- Awareness/education/events



# Birds of cutaway peatlands

- Whooper Swan
- Greenland White-fronted Goose
- Red Grouse
- Hen Harrier
- Merlin
- Lapwing
- Snipe
- Curlew
- Redshank
- Common Sandpiper
- Short-eared Owl
- Skylark
- Grasshopper Warbler



# Birds of cutaway peatlands – Other species

Ten baseline survey sites on Midlands raised bogs:

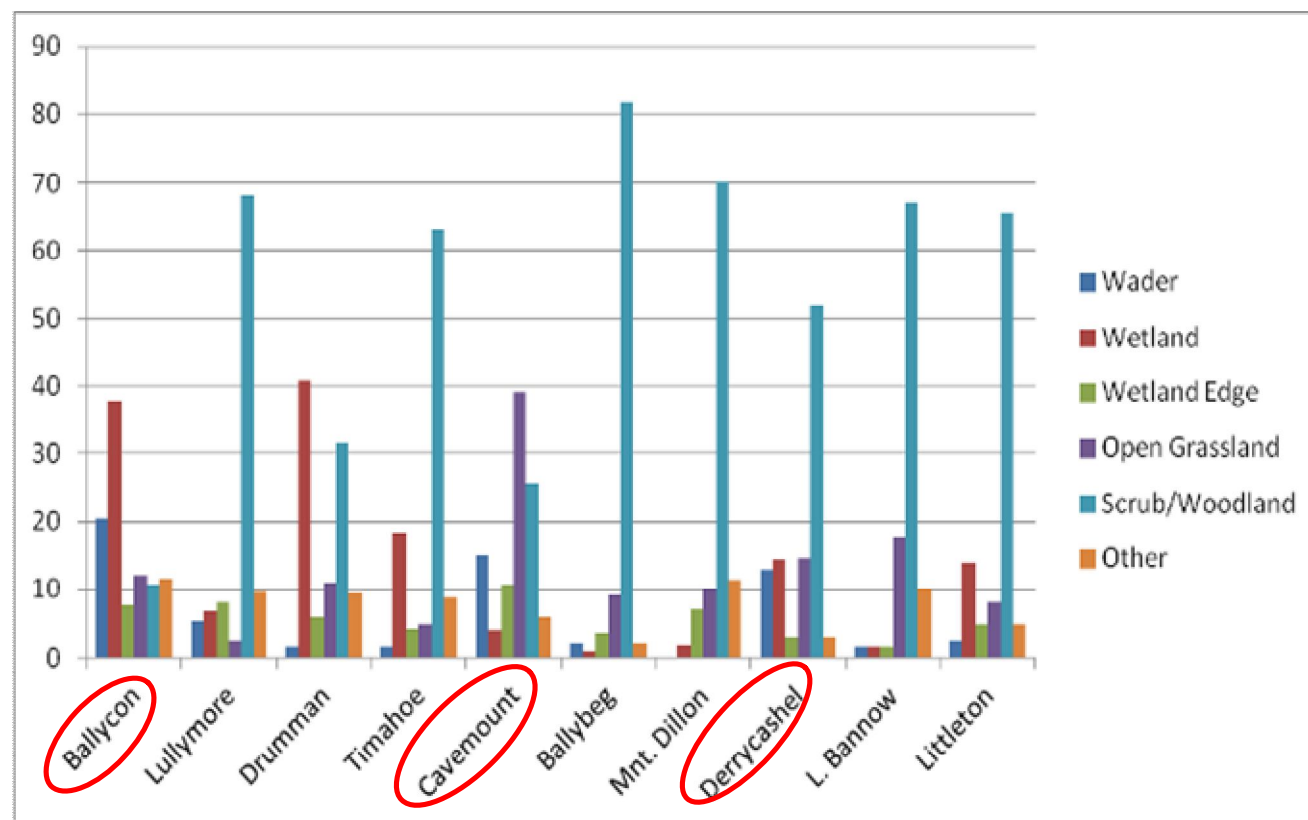
A total of 62 species recorded, including five Red-list and 21 Amber-list species

Ballycon and Drumman  
good for wetland  
species; Cavemount  
good for open grassland  
species; other sites good  
for woodland and scrub  
species.

Species community  
reflects  
habitats and succession.



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# Action Plans for birds

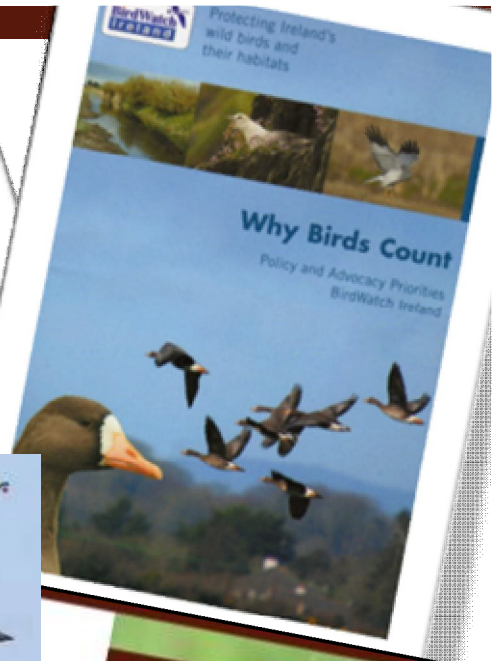
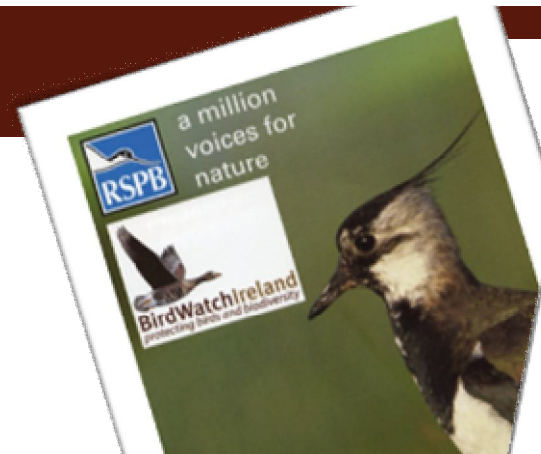
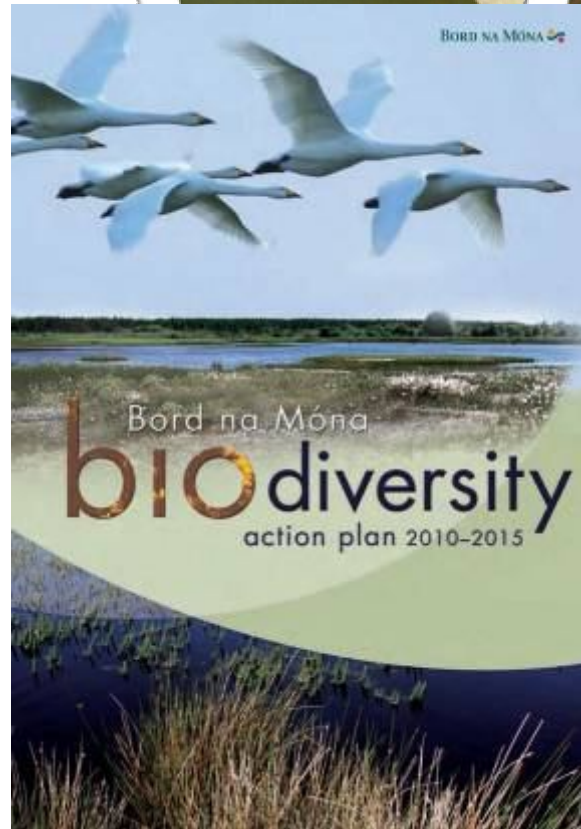
BnM - BAP

BWI - plans & strategies

State & EU

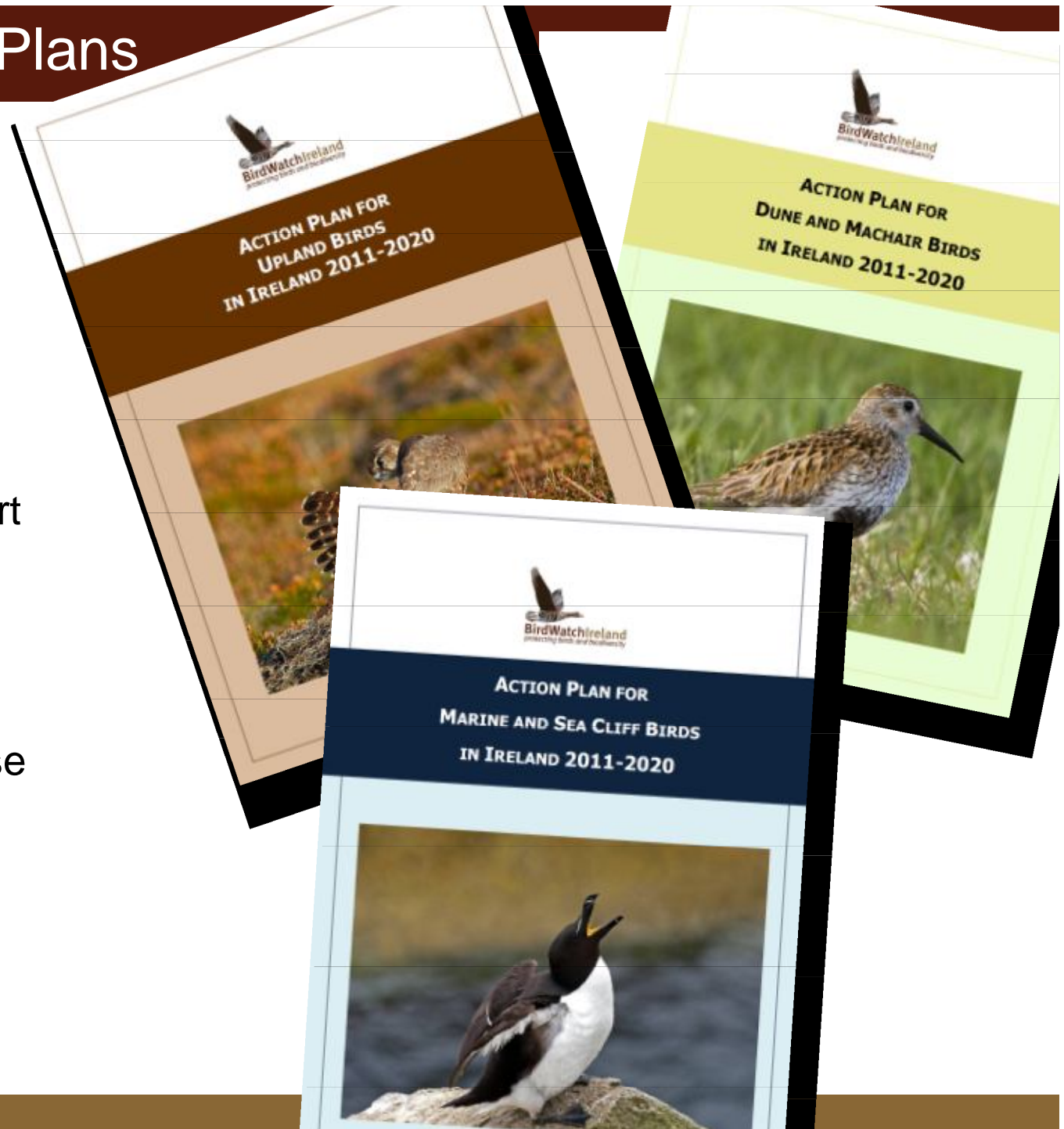
EU birds directive art. 12 reporting  
National Biodiversity plan  
National Ramsar committee etc.

SAPs – group or single sp.



# Species Action Plans

- 10 plans
- Species groups
- Stakeholder engagement from start
- Stakeholder sign up ongoing
- Implementation phase underway



# Wetland birds



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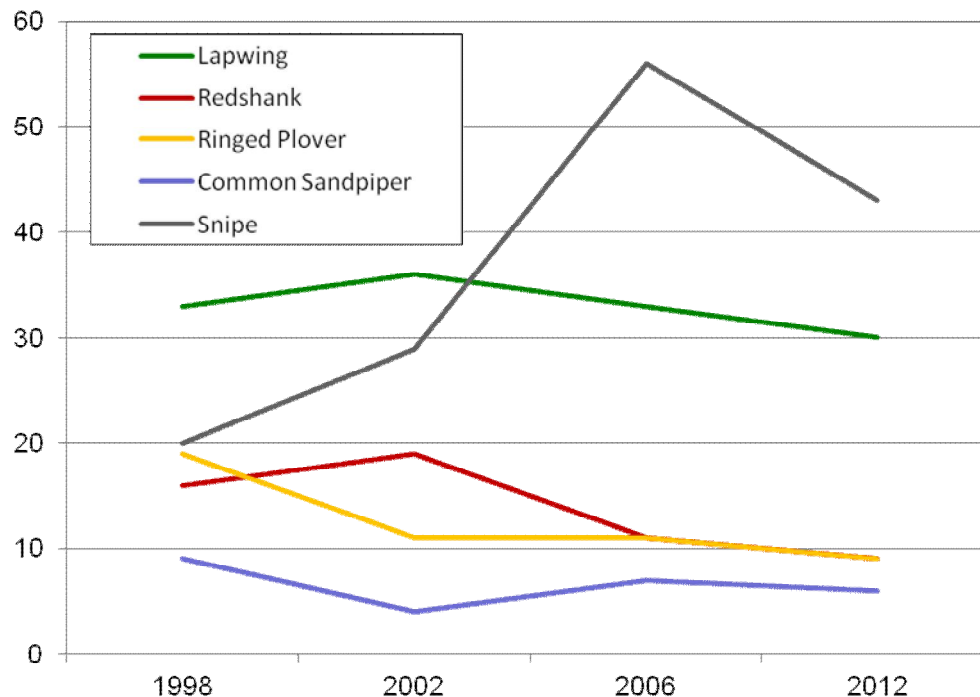
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# Wetland birds on cutaway bogs

- Whooper Swan
- Greenland White-fronted Goose
- Lapwing
- Snipe
- Curlew
- Redshank
- Common Sandpiper



# Boora Breeding Wader Surveys



Overall declines for four species:

- Lapwing (-9%)
- Redshank (-44%)
- Ringed Plover (-53%)
- Common Sandpiper (-33%)

Snipe increased, but difficult to survey

Declines probably linked to habitat succession - increasing amounts of open cutaways being covered by trees and scrub

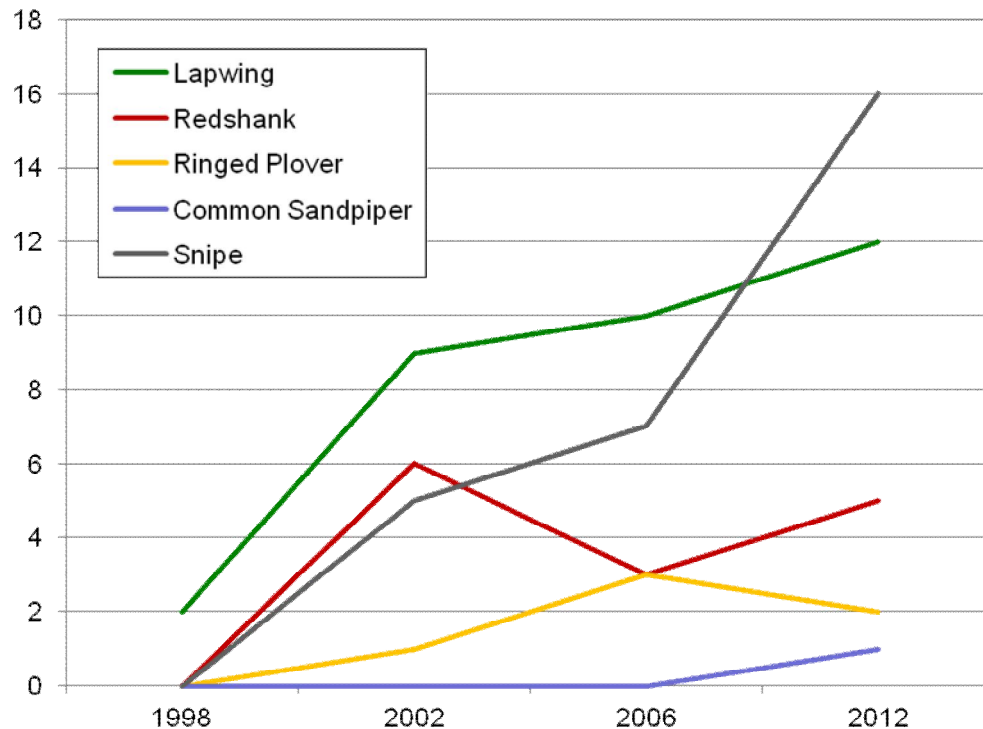
Is greater management of cutaways for breeding waders now required??



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# Breeding Waders at Drinagh



Overall increases for all species since 1998, and since 2006 four species have increased:

- Lapwing (+20%)
- Redshank +67%
- Snipe (+129%)
- Common Sandpiper (now breeds)

Ringed Plover declined from three to two pairs.

Work on other species ongoing

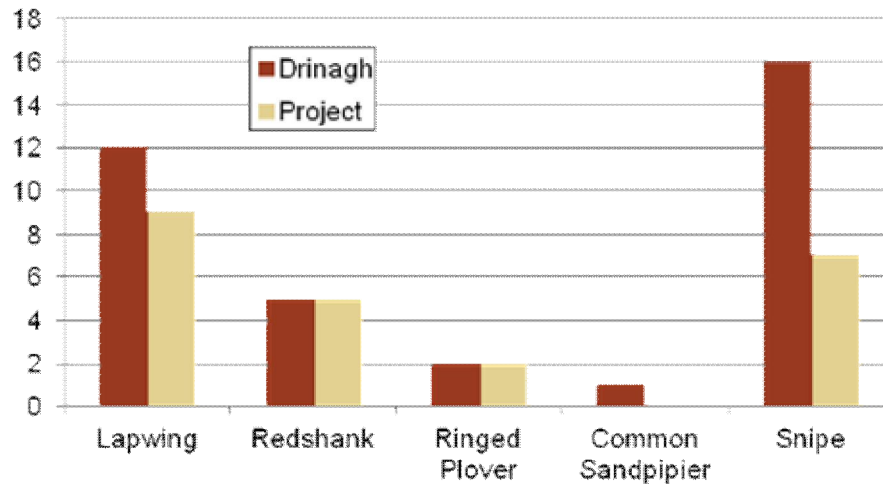
Increases linked to re-wetting of habitats, re-profiling of drains and scrub and tree removal.



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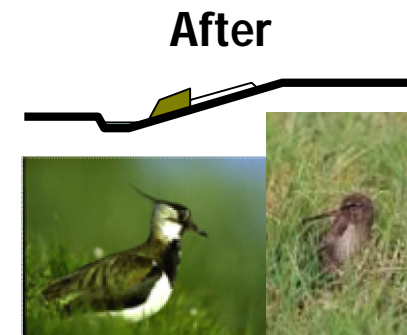
# Breeding Waders at Drinagh



Drinagh: c.620 ha; 36 prs waders

Project: c. 31 ha; 23 prs waders

64% of waders on 5% of the area...



# Other Bird Species on Cutaway bogs

Two blanket bog restoration sites surveyed in Co. Mayo  
Bellacorrick and Bangor (Oweninny bogs)

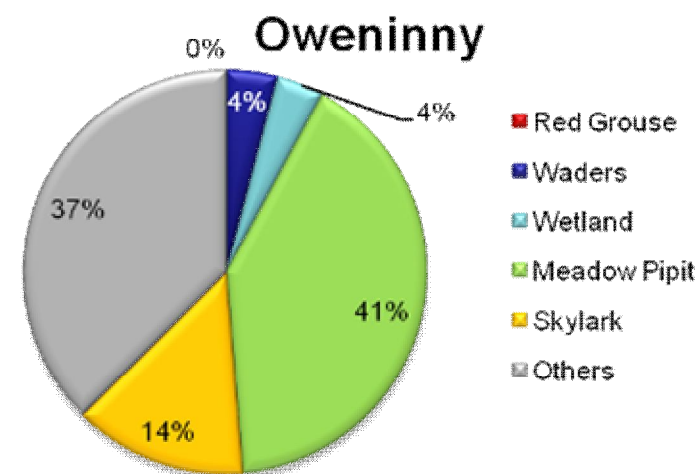
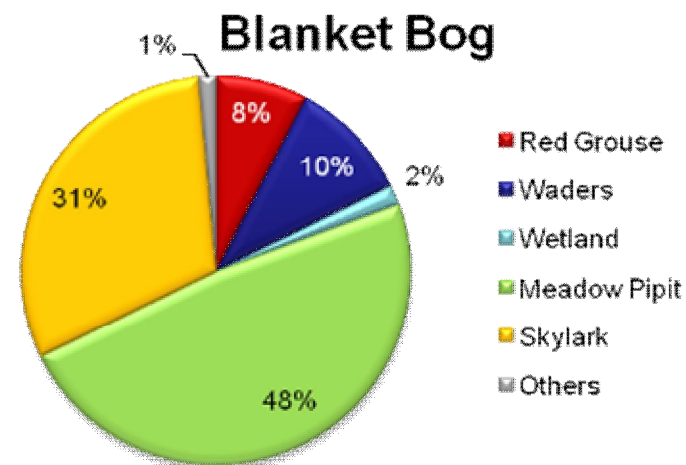
Restoration progressing well, with blanket bog generalists (Meadow Pipit and Skylark) present, and some specialists (Teal and Dunlin) recorded.

As peat-forming habitats re-establish, more blanket bog specialists, such as Golden Plover and Red Grouse, likely to colonise.

Ongoing management required to ensure correct habitats develop, and to remove trees and scrub (evidenced by large number of "other" species)



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## Other important species & projects

Red Grouse



Grey Partridge



# Awareness, education & enjoyment



# Birds of cutaway peatlands – education:

In addition to BioBlitz at Boora, which included the 2012 National Dawn Chorus Day walk, BirdWatch Ireland organised two other guided walks at Boora in 2011 and 2012 (Moth Night and a Wintering Bird Walk); in 2011 we also had a walk at Ballycon

BirdWatch Ireland are currently undertaking breeding wader research at Boora (funded by Bord na Móna and in conjunction with NPWS and RCSI), and supervised an MSc project on butterflies on the cutaways at Boora in 2011



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# Birds of cutaway peatlands – recreation:

Six BirdWatch Ireland branches (Carlow, Dublin (South), Dublin (Tolka), Kildare, Mayo and Westmeath) all had trips to Boora in 2012.

38 out of 58 bird sightings reported for Offaly on [www.irishbirding.com](http://www.irishbirding.com) in 2012 were at Boora ; a further 4 were at Ballycon.



# Contribution to work under Species Action Plans for Birds

Action contributing most to 2 group action plans:



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# BnM Work contributing to Species Action Plans for Birds

**Monitoring & research** - contributing to objectives on:  
knowledge gaps

evidence base for management

establishment of regular monitoring programmes

**Trial habitat managem't** – contributing to objectives on:  
demonstration projects

habitat restoration/rehabilitation

**Education & events** – contributing to objectives on:

raising awareness of value of birds and habitats

engendering public support for conservation action



# Birds of cutaways – Future Priorities

- Establish vision & plans for rehabilitation of cutaways for priority birds
  - plan for key sites, networks & partnerships
- Research the impact on priority birds of proposed land-use mix determined by any future plans
- Determine & plan future monitoring needs and priorities
- Scope future aftercare plans and engage with partners (BWI etc) to determine opportunities for bird & biodiversity conservation
- Audit current & potential contribution to national and in-house action plans
- Education & Awareness – continue development of education and events programmes and review provision of opportunities for wildlife tourism initiatives

# Cutaways & birds - the big opportunity



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What is the opportunity?

***Wetland Restoration on a  
Landscape Scale!***



# Wild vision for cut-away bogs

- Wherever possible restore to working bog systems
- Where not possible large parts rehabilitated to wetland and other semi-natural habitats – special places with special wildlife
- Wetland habitats at an unprecedented scale – units >1000ha and networks >5000ha
- Home to enigmatic species and a true wildlife spectacle
- Benign access by people to enjoy and interact with wildlife and wild places
- Positive economics – new visitors bring money to local economies
- Carbon capture - potential to make these areas carbon sinks
- Community involvement in management (volunteering, training etc)
- Ecosystem services – reduced flooding? materials?

# Wetlands from cutaway bogs

## biodiversity and socio-economic potential

- Blank canvas – huge opportunity
- Very large size and potential connectivity
- Hydrology is naturally wet – easier to make a wetland!
- Opportunities to carry out key works prior to completing the commercial life of the bogs
- Situated close to transport networks
- Local communities needing improved long-term socio-economic fortunes

- Only wetlands where not possible to restore to active bog systems
- Wetlands lost and threatened both nationally and globally
- Opportunity for restoration at a landscape scale rarely seen in Western Europe
- Special species – special responsibility – special benefits
- Ireland's chance to lead on wildlife conservation AND carbon capture
- Wildlife is good for the economy!

Why restore wetlands on cutaway bogs?











*“A particular emphasis (of Bord na Móna) is to significantly contribute to the enhancement of the national biodiversity resource through wise management of cutaway bogs...”*

Gabriel D’Arcy, 2009



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